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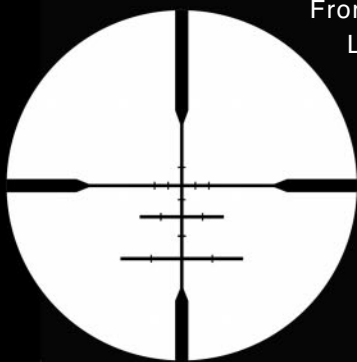
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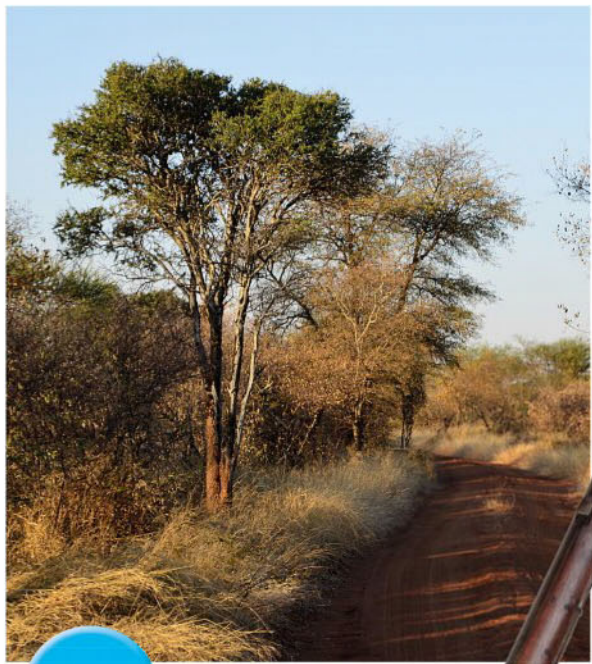


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AUGUST 2015

ON THE COVER:
Ruger's .22/45 Lite pistol is a departure from the traditional look. The Lite's tubular receiver is machined from lightweight, aerospace-grade aluminium. Read more on page 12. Photo supplied by Paul Scarlata.

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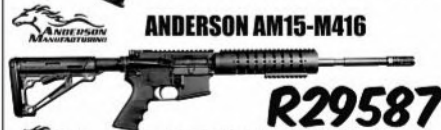
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Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow

READERS PHONING *Magnum's* offices in future will miss the dulcet tones of Elizabeth ('Liz') Howard-Davies in her usual place at the switchboard and handling orders for binders or back-issues. Liz and book-keeper Eirlys Edmunds recently retired. Their combined years of service with *Magnum* probably add up to nigh on half a century.

Liz's late husband, Tudor, was *Magnum's* editor from 1982 to 1987. Liz joined our staff in 1994, and soon became a factotum whose job included being secretary to yours truly. Tudor had been a professional hunter prior to joining *MAN- Magnum*, so Liz's safari background stood her in good stead for her job here. Having a secretary whom I could ask to search our photo library for a pic of a tsessebe or a lechwe, and who actually knew what to look for, *and* who could tell a double rifle from a double shotgun, was a great help.

Liz's job on the switchboard was not an easy one, especially when Post Office failures or strikes meant that subscribers did not receive their magazines on time. The phone would ring incessantly, and some of the subscribers could be extremely rude, speaking to Liz as though she was personally responsible. The more abusive callers soon discovered that Liz, who normally wouldn't say boo to a goose, could develop quite a sharp turn of phrase when pushed!

While generally seen as a quiet and retiring type, Liz could reveal a mischievous sense of humour beneath that demure exterior. Part of her job was to run interference for me when readers phoned with queries during peak production time. The rationale was that it's better to disappoint a dozen or so callers, than to miss the deadline, thus incurring the wrath of thousands of readers. Some could be very indignant on being told I wasn't taking calls, which was trying for Liz – and for the other girls in her absence.

Once, to lighten things up a bit, I typed out a list of six excuses that they could keep handy for days when I was too busy to take calls. This sort of thing: "I'm awfully sorry, but Mr Woods sold one of his rifles yesterday and is quite inconsolable. Until he gets closure on this, it would only be cruel to discuss rifle matters with him. Can I ask you to phone again in a month or so?" Or, "Yes, Mr Woods is here, but I'm afraid that he suffers from multiple personality disorder, and today he is Boy George, so he'll be quite useless on the subject of guns or hunting."

Clearly, this was tongue-in-cheek, not for actual use. But when one insistent caller demanded to know why Liz would not put him through, I heard her brightly give him this retort: "Well, Mr Jones, you pick a number from one to six and I'll tell you why you can't talk to him." I dashed through to reception, waving my hands, mouthing, "No! No!" but she'd hung up on him!

Liz was a great help to me as a secretary and research assistant, and she has my heartfelt thanks.

Now, Eirlys. Hmmnnn...yes... Eirlys. Where to begin: that's the problem. I can't recall how it all started, but Mrs Edmunds and I have spent over a quarter of a century hurling insults at each other. Our colleagues at *Magnum* believe it's all just good-natured bluff, describing it as a 'love-hate' relationship, while Eirlys and I are at great pains to assure them they are quite wrong, rather it's a 'hate-hate' relationship.

An early incident involved a jibe I made about her name. Due to its weird spelling, I assumed Eirlys was Irish. Full of sound and fury, she informed me that she is Welsh. And the funny side was that she couldn't see that this was worse than being Irish! I took to calling her Earl – that way I didn't giggle every time I pronounced it.

Of course, it didn't help that I expressed empathy with her husband, whom I perceived as a man who had "borne the whips and scorns of time". I was not surprised that Earl was appointed as *Magnum's* book-keeper (read 'debt collector') – she could be frighteningly intimidating. When *Magnum* hosted the SA Firearms Dealers Association's AGM one year, I appointed Earl as the bouncer. We declare a fragile truce during festive occasions, and I must say Earl is great fun at a party – though her taste in wine is appalling – *Late Harvest*, for pity's sake!

Our respective jobs did not much bring the two of us into contact, but Earl always brought her morning newspaper to work with her, which I naturally borrowed during lunchbreaks, taking great care to leave crumbs and tea stains in it. If she was reading it herself at the time, we'd trade disparagements and in this manner managed to keep the feud alive. However, she always triumphed during the annual July

Handicap office draw (a tradition she herself founded). The staff would pool money to provide the winnings for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, and we each drew two horses' names out of a hat. Of course, Earl ran the draw, and there is little doubt in my mind that she rigged it, for I unfailingly drew bum

horses, never winning in all those years, while a win or a place regularly went to her *and the boss* – a cunning move to ensure no-one challenged the result.

Seriously, beneath her armour, Eirlys has a heart of gold. She is committed to uplifting the disadvantaged, and over the years a constant stream of people appeared at reception who'd been given her name as someone who'd help them. Eirlys is a fiercely loyal wife, mother and grandmother – and intends spending her retirement years enjoying her grandchildren.

We thank Liz and Eirlys for their service and friendship of many years, and wish them a peaceful and happy retirement. 



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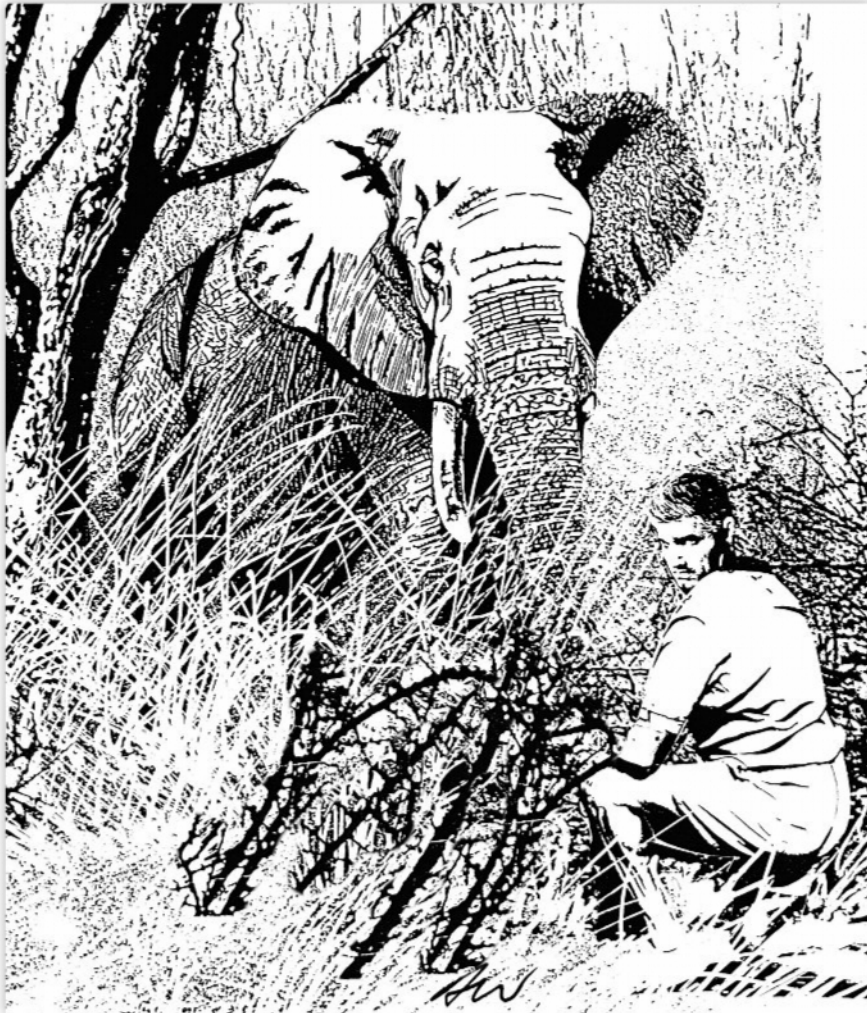
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One Mpondo

by JOHN COLEMAN



I HAVE WRITTEN before of the days when I lived in the Kazungula area, just east of Kasane, where the Chobe National Park begins. This is where the north-eastern point of Southern Rhodesia, the eastern point of Botswana, the south-eastern point of Caprivi and the western border of Zambia all converge at the confluence of the Zambezi and Chobe rivers.

In the old days, this area was a bit like the historically famous 'Crooks Corner' at the junction of Mozambique, Rhodesia and South Africa (north-

eastern corner of the Kruger Park), the hunting grounds of the notorious poacher Bvekenya Barnard of *Dhlu-lamithi* fame described by author TV Bulpin in *The Ivory Trail*, and by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick in *Jock of the Bushveld*. It got its name because criminals and poachers could hop from country to country pretty easily to avoid capture, and Bvekenya Barnard was even said to have moved the boundary beacon at will, depending on which side of it his latest poached tusker had fallen.

When I first lived in the Kazungula

area, there was no Chobe National Park, and you could hunt all along the Chobe/Linyanti river. There were large numbers of elephant all along the river and inland, right into Rhodesia. No boundary game fence existed and animals could freely cross the border. In fact, there wasn't even a customs post on any of the borders there, only a faint cutline through the teak forests, which hunters seldom observed. The sole game ranger there was Pat Bromfield and he was very seldom in the area.

MY TRACKER, Luka, came from Lishuma, a village in Botswana near the border, and his relatives hunted all around that area. One day Luka told me about a huge, one-tusked elephant frequently seen in the forests around there, his tusk protruding for about the length of a man, and as thick as my thigh. If that was indeed so, it would weigh over 100lbs. I had to find and see this bull, even if I didn't shoot it. I would decide when I saw it.

I instructed Luka to ask his relatives not to tell anyone else about this bull, but to report to me as soon as they next saw it. I was well known as *Ka-mtolilo* (the whistler) among the local Bushmen, and they would always come to me first. I had a licence for two elephant, hence could legally take this bull if I chose. There were other professional hunters in the Kasane area, including John Lawrence, Jack Blacklaws, Eric Rundgren, Dougie Wright and Andrew Holmberg; I hoped none came across this elephant before I did. I was hoping to find the old bull on the Rhodesian side, where I was the only one hunting.

Weeks passed with no news of One Mpondo. I was pretty busy shooting problem elephant, lion and buffalo, so I almost forgot about the old bull with one huge tusk.

KAZUMA PAN spans the border between Botswana and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), roughly two thirds of it lying in Botswana. It has a black, cotton-soil surface, unlike the surrounding Kalahari sandveld in that area. It fills during the rains and dries up in the dry season, leaving hummocks and holes. Elephant walk all over it to reach the receding water, leaving deep footprints in the mud, which dry hard. To travel over this by vehicle is a back-breaking undertaking, crashing from one hole to the next and over numerous foot-high hummocks.

There are a few pans which retain water well into the dry season, attracting elephant and other game. John Lawrence and Harry Selby called this area the haemorrhoidal plain (I believe local game ranger, Pat Bromfield, first named it) and Lew Games and I, among others, later adopted the name. During the dry season, old One Mpondo was reputed to live right out in Kazuma Pan area, but as travelling there was so uncomfortable, most hunters avoided it, as did I.

THEN A RELATIVE of Luka came to tell us he'd seen One Mpondo while hunting on the plain a few days earlier. Luka assured me this man was reliable and we should go and see. The bull was in Botswana, but I went anyway, wanting to determine the size of his tusk.

We set off in my Land Rover, initially taking the sand road from Victoria Falls towards Kazungula and then branching off west through the teak forests to the edge of the plain. I was already clamping my buttocks in anticipation of the pounding we were about to suffer. Crawling along in low range, we crashed and bounced for a couple of hours, eventually arriving at one of the small pans. It still held some muddy water, so Luka went to check for elephant spoor while I parked in the shade of some straggly mopane trees. Luka beckoned me over to a big *combretum* (leadwood) tree next to the pan, so I stumbled across the broken ground. He pointed out rub-marks of dried mud

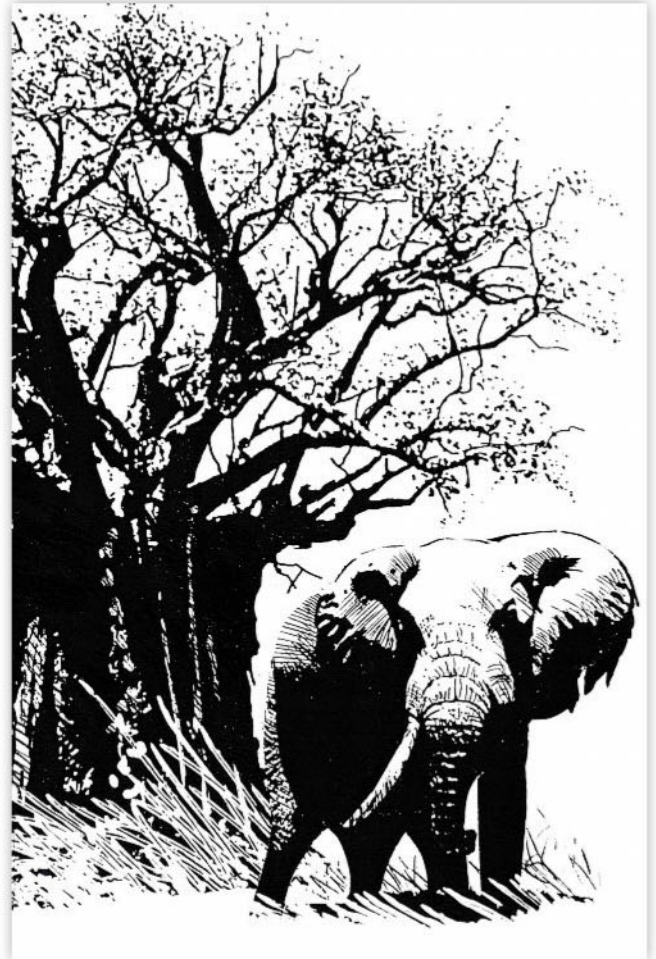
high on the trunk of the tree and some very large elephant tracks at the water's edge, worn at the heel, made two days earlier. "Baba," he said excitedly, "this is a very big, old *tho*. He drank here two days ago and headed towards the border."

MY ADRENALINE kicked in, along with some dismay that we'd have to endure a lot more of the haemorrhoidal plain before locating the elephant, and even then, it might be the wrong bull. However, I was not about to drop out. After pounding laboriously along for another hour, Luka told me to stop. "We are now on the Botswana border; what do you want to do?" he asked. I could see nothing to indicate a border, but took his word for it. "We'll go on; I want to see this animal," I replied.

It was getting hot and a rippling mirage was forming. Some gemsbuck in the distance appeared huge and slightly airborne. "There is no water here, Baba; we must go a lot further," Luka said, so we battled on. Finally a few mopane trees appeared in the mirage and I headed towards them, hoping to find water and fresh sign of the elephant.

A SMALL PAN amid the mopane trees held only wet mud in its centre. The bull's tracks passed near it, but continued northwest towards the Chobe river which was 30km away. We reached the surrounding teak forest and I thankfully parked the Land Rover to continue on foot, hoping the elephant wouldn't go much further before resting in the shade.

Walking in loose Kalahari sand during the heat of the day is almost as stressful as pounding across the haem-



orrhoidal plain, but we stayed on the clear spoor for three hours without getting any closer. Finally Luka said, "Baba, this *tho* is not going to stop before it reaches the Chobe river." I had to agree, so we wearily headed back towards the Land Rover. We'd had nothing to drink all day and were extremely thirsty. We searched for water on the way back, eventually finding a small, almost dried-up puddle with green slime and elephant dung floating on it. I scraped the slime and dung off, let the lukewarm water settle, and gingerly drank some. It tasted foul, but helped quench my thirst. Luka declined. We finally reached the Land Rover and returned via the Kazuma Depression to avoid another pounding.

I heard no more about One Mpondo for some time, and resigned myself to the probability that he'd crossed into Caprivi or been shot by another hunter.

Then, one day, I was on Kazungula Ranch, on the Botswana border, having shot two cattle-killing lions. I was about to head home when a Bushman from Lishuma appeared and addressed Luka in their bird-like language. The only word I recognised was 'tho'. "Baba, One Mpondo is back in the area; some hunters saw him on the other side of Kazuma, heading towards Chamabonda in Rhodesia." This is a long, open vlel in the Victoria Falls National Park and, being a game-ranger at the time, I could go in there to have a look. Next day I told the Warden I was going on patrol and headed for Chamabonda.

AT THE VLEI, I found a shady campsite near a waterhole, cut a long pole, and hung it between two trees with a tarpaulin over it to serve as shelter. I hung a mosquito net over my stretcher, then set out to recce the area. This vlel had hundreds of sable, so I shot a young bull to feed the labourers working on the road. I hung the carcass from the pole inside my shelter.

Finding no sign of One Mpondo, I turned in for the night. Early next morning I awoke to find the sable carcass gone. "Where is the meat?" I yelled at the trackers. They came over and began laughing. "Baba, a lion came in while you were asleep and took the meat from right next to your bed." Luka pointed to some lion tracks. Following the drag marks, we found the partially eaten carcass about fifty yards away. I am usually a light sleeper, so the lions must have been very quiet. My mos-

quito net probably kept them from investigating me.

WE TRAVELLED up the lengthy vlel to the teak forest at its end, where there was a small pan. There were fresh tracks, as big as we had seen in Kazuma depression. The elephant had drunk, fed around the area then moved out. We eagerly set off on the spoor, heading back towards Kazuma. Now my heart sank as I realised we'd probably have to endure the haemorrhoidal plain again. Sure enough, after a while we observed that the bull was not slowing, and was heading straight towards the depression again. Luka turned to me and raised his eyebrows. "Keep going," I snarled. Setting a fast pace we slogged through the heavy Kalahari sand, reaching the edge of the depression at midday. The tracks headed straight towards the centre without slowing, as if the bull had a destination in mind – probably the Chobe river. After a further two hours we had to abandon the chase and head back to the vehicle, spending another few hours stumbling over the rough plain and through the sand. I was becoming obsessed with finding this bull.

THEN, ONE MORNING, I was in Botswana, on the Chobe river near Serondellas, after visiting old Pop Lamont. Driving along the sand road parallel to the river, I saw a huge, fresh elephant track crossing the road towards the river. Luka took one look and said, "It is One Mpondo; I know his spoor." I decided to

follow as far as I could, in the hope the bull had not crossed over to Caprivi. I did not have my rifle, and besides, I was not permitted to shoot in Botswana, but I had to see this animal to satisfy my curiosity. The spoor meandered down to the river, where the bull had taken a drink and then headed back into Botswana. We followed it back across the road, into the teak forests inland.

AFTER WALKING through the sand for about three hours, I was about to give up when we came upon a fresh, warm dung pile. "Right, he's close," I said excitedly, "Now let's see what he looks like." Luka nodded and we quietly resumed tracking. As quite often happens during midday, the slight breeze kept changing and eddying. We could hear the occasional cracking of branches and knew we were very close. Then the wind changed again and everything went dead quiet. He had scented us. Suddenly he charged towards us, looming out of the undergrowth, then stopped, head up and ears out. He was bluffing, I hoped...

There he was, old One Mpondo himself, with his single huge, tusk jutting out. We kept dead still while he glared in our direction for a few seconds, then turned and ambled off.

We never saw him again. Shortly after that, he was shot by Dougie Wright (so I heard – I am open to correction). His tusk weighed 108 pounds: the first hundred-pounder taken legally in Botswana, I believe, and a record at the time. 

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LETTERS

Your letters are an important part of Magnum. We (readers and editors) like to hear your problems and opinions. Unless marked 'NOT FOR PUBLICATION' all letters are considered and are edited for length and/or clarity. Pen-names may be used, provided that your full name, address and daytime phone number are furnished. Please try to keep your letters short and to the point.

Ethical Hunting

I have been a professional hunter in Namibia, and both my wife and I have been hunting outfitters for many years. I have been an avid *Magnum* reader for many years. We have old *Magnums* lying around everywhere in the lodge and our clients love reading them. Many a conversation around the camp fire has stemmed from an article in one of the old magazines. However, two remarks in your January 2015 edition prompted me to offer my five cents worth.

Firstly, I do not agree with the statement that clients get 'conned' into thinking they are hunting wild lions on the farms in South Africa. I have many friends who are hunting outfitters in South Africa, and I attend the same gun and hunting shows in the USA as they do, and I can assure you that everyone knows the lion hunts offered in South Africa are cage-bred cats. In fact, SCI offers a separate chapter in their record book for lions hunted in South Africa, as distinct from free-ranging lion trophies. I am not in a position to comment on how ethically or unethically these hunts are conducted, but I can say that any client booking a lion hunt with a South African outfitter, knows exactly what he is letting himself in for, and what he's going to get – unless it is a case of "none so blind as those who will not see".

Secondly, I agree in principle that bakkie hunting is not ethical, and that the animal deserves more respect, etc. When I hunt for myself, I prefer doing it on foot. However, if a client chooses to book a hunting safari with me, is it really my place to tell him no, you're too old/fat/out-of-shape to book a hunt with me? Or should I help him realize his 'African dream' in a way that is physically possible for him to achieve, and as ethical as I can make it under these circumstances? I have seen clients taking animals from the back of the bakkie who showed as much respect for the animal and appreciation of the trophy as anyone. It seems more so with people who worked a long time to afford the 'luxury' of an African safari, and also with older people. – **J Schickerling, Namibia**

Brian Marsh

I was saddened to read Brian Marsh's obituary by Gregor Woods in the January 2015 edition of *Magnum*. I first met Brian in 1966. I had made it known that I wanted to work in the game ranching industry. I had a temporary job on a farm in the Mushandike area in Zimbabwe, reaping, shell-ing and bagging maize. At the time, I was half-way up the stack with one of the farm workers, throwing maize bags up onto the top to be neatly stacked, when the farm worker told

me there was a person at the entrance to the shed, looking at us. Brian had been watching us for some time. I looked up, saw him and climbed down to meet him.

He introduced himself to me and asked if I still wanted a job in game ranching. The interview took place over cups of tea, and at the end of it Brian asked me when I could start. I had almost completed my work on the farm and would soon be leaving, and was looking for another job, hopefully a more permanent one. This was a start to an exciting and very enjoyable period spent working for Brian, for whom I hold great respect. I hunted or culled game on Central Estates in the Midlands and then on a ranch at Matetsi with a short spell on Nandi Estates near Chiredzi.

Brian was a great boss but he made sure that we (and there were a number of us working as hunters for him) operated within the rules he had laid down, and woe betide any of us who did not follow them. (Though I must admit, I think we were somewhat more afraid of his wife, Jill, as she ran the administrative side of the business and if we were tardy in submitting our returns, we very soon heard from her, no matter how far from the base we were operating.) Brian taught me a great deal.

continued on page 67 ►



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All the .22/45 Lite's controls are located in the proper "1911" positions for easy manipulation. Note the fully-adjustable rear and square blade front sights, and the loaded chamber indicator in the left receiver wall.

Ruger's .22/45 Lite Pistol

by **PAUL SCARLATA**

photos **ELAINE SANDBERG & BECKY SCARLATA**



READING THE WORDS 'Ruger', 'pistol' and 'rimfire' in the same sentence, most shooters, understandably, might think of that company's Mark III pistol. Known as the 'Standard' pistol since its introduction in 1949, the Mark III has set the standard for high-quality but affordable .22 auto-loaders. The Mark III became popular for serious target shooting and – the most important role of any .22 firearm – plinking.

Shortly after the 'plastic revolution' struck, Ruger introduced their .22/45 pistol. It utilized a Mark III receiver and barrel mated to a Zytel polymer frame with removable grip panels, and simulated the shape and feel of a 1911 pistol.

The Mark III and .22/45 are large pistols, weighing between 0.88kg and 1.3kg. This makes them less than suitable for smaller shooters or for use as what we call 'trail guns' in the USA, where weight is at a premium. However, Ruger are well known for their business acumen, and recently introduced a new line of pistols with all the traditional features of the .22/45 plus a few new ones, including a considerable weight reduction – the Ruger .22/45 Lite.

Specifications: Ruger .22/45 Lite Pistol

Calibre	.22lr
OAL	216mm
Barrel	112mm (4.4")
Weight	0.64kg
Construction	receiver: aluminium frame: Zytel polymer barrel: stainless steel
Grips	Zytel polymer
Sights	front: square blade rear: fully adjustable
Action	blow-back semi-auto
Finish	blue anodize
Capacity	10 +1

The .22/45 Lite is a departure from Ruger's traditional appearance. First of all, it is blue. I've never seen a bright blue gun before! The .22/45 Lite's tubular receiver is machined from lightweight, aerospace-grade aluminium and extends forward to create a full length barrel shroud which has five flutes on either side which not only further reduce weight but give the pistol a sexy look. Atop the receiver is a Weaver type rail for mounting optical or electronic sights, which are becoming popular for handguns today. For shooters who prefer a more traditional sighting

arrangement, the pistol has a square blade front sight and an adjustable square notch rear sight.

The 112mm lightweight, stainless-steel barrel, encased in a barrel-sleeve within the shroud, is secured in place by a tension nut at the muzzle end. Removing a knurled cap at the front of the barrel exposes a threaded section to accommodate a variety of muzzle accessories.

THE ONE-PIECE frame is made from Zytel polymer and fitted with black laminate grip panels, the surfaces of which feel 'tacky', providing a secure grip, even with wet or oily hands. The grip panels are removable, affording a choice of types.

Given that the shape resembles and feels like a 1911 pistol, there is no need to go into detail about its ergonomics.

The magazine-release, slide-stop and safety are all located in the same positions as on a 1911 pistol. All these controls are within reach of the right



Left: For offhand test-firing I installed an Eotech MRDS dot sight. Note the loaded chamber indicator.
Right: Sample targets fired from a rest at 25m show pleasing accuracy.

thumb without moving the pistol around in your hand. When a round is chambered, a loaded chamber indicator extends past the left receiver wall, providing both visual and tactile evidence.

The single-column magazine holds ten rounds of .22lr ammunition. Like all Ruger Mark III and .22/45 pistols, the .22/45 Lite features a magazine disconnect safety. It prevents the pistol being fired when the cartridge container is removed.

WHEN YOU pick up the .22/45 Lite, you know instantly that it was accurately named. It is LITE, very LIGHT, tipping the scales at 0.64kg (unloaded) which is a 113g less than the next lightest pistol in the .22/45 line.

You want to know about the blue? Well the frame/barrel-shroud features a blue anodized finish which, once you get used to it, is attractive. For shooters wanting a more subdued look, the .22/45 Lite is also offered with a Cobolt anodized frame and ventilated barrel shroud without the Weaver rail.

I test-fired the Lite for accuracy from a pistol rest at 25 metres, using

four different brands of .22lr. It showed a preference for slower moving bullets and performed best with the CCI Pistol Match and Remington Subsonic loads

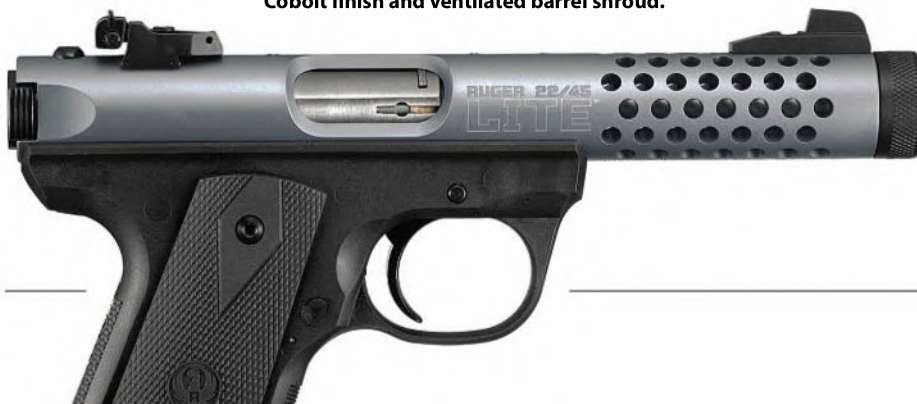
– both averaged under 55mm for the three 5-shot groups fired. Considering the Lite's short barrel and sighting radius I found this performance very satisfying.



The .22/45 Lite proved a fine-handling, accurate and fun pistol to shoot.

TEST FIRING RESULTS:			
Ammunition	Best Group	Avg Group	Velocity
CCI Pistol Match 40gr	33mm	46mm	1038fps
Federal Champion 40gr	38mm	58mm	1164fps
Winchester Super X HP 37gr	46mm	64mm	1212fps
Remington Subsonic 38gr	33mm	49mm	998fps
Note: Accuracy testing consisted of three 5-shot groups fired from an MTM K-Zone rest at 25m. Velocity is the average of five rounds measured 3 metres from muzzle.			

The .22/45 Lite is also available with a subdued Cobolt finish and ventilated barrel shroud.



As with the other Mark III and .22/45 pistols I've owned over the years, it was a bit of a chore to load the magazines to capacity. I would suggest that Ruger include a collar type magazine loading tool to ease this task.

I found a long-unused Eotech MRDS dot sight, which I mounted on the Ruger. My wife, Becky, commented

that, with this sight, the .22/45 Lite looked like something more appropriate to a Star Wars movie than our shooting range. I had an urge to do something 'different' from merely running the dot-sighted Ruger through the usual series of offhand drills. So I placed a large number of skeet clays out on the 15 and 25 yard backstops and engaged them in rapid fire.

I HAVE RECENTLY tested various dot-sighted pistols and have not yet grown accustomed to the way the little red dot bounces around while you're trying to aim. So, while I would like to say I dusted a clay pigeon with each round at a steady cadence, I cannot. It took more rounds than I expected, but I had a hell of a lot of fun doing it.

I must say the Ruger ran like a champ and we are still waiting for the first malfunction to occur. And that is something you can't always say about out-of-the-box rimfire pistols. My only

criticism of the .22/45 Lite is that the magazines didn't drop free when the release was pressed. It had to be pulled out of the grip. This task would be much easier if the floor-plate had some kind of lip or extension you could get a hold of when extracting the magazine.

I have been shooting Ruger .22 pistols for over three decades. I can verify the .22/45 Lite lives up to the family's reputation for accuracy, reliability and ease of operation. It would

be an excellent choice for target shooting or for use as a trail gun. If your idea of quality time is spending an afternoon teaching several youngsters the basics of safe gun handling and marksmanship, then you're going to find the Ruger .22/45 Lite an excellent companion.

The pistol will be available in South Africa at the end of August at a suggested retail price of R10 280. For more information contact Guns and Bows on 021-949-2891. 

Watch this video of the Ruger .22/45 Lite to see the pistol's features and how it shoots.



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.223 Rem	Tikka	R23 100
.223 Rem	CZ L/H 527	R15 950
.223 Rem	CZ & Lynx Scope	R14 950
.223	TC Predator	R13 850
.243 Win	Tikka T3	R23 100
.243 Win	Remington	R17 950
.243	Mausers	R11 500
25-06	TC Venture	R13 850
.22/250	Howa	R13 850
.243 Win	CZ 550	R17 700
.243 Win	T/C Dimension L/H	R13 200
.243 Win	Winchester	R17 670
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.270 Win	Mausers	R14 500
.270 Win	Winchester	R17 670
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.270	Weatherby & Scope	R14 500
7mm-08	Remington 700	R13 500
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.308 Win	Howa	R11 380
.308 Win	Howa S/Steel	R13 160
.308 Win	Winchester Coyote	R16 950
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.416 Rigby	CZ 550	R25 280
.270	T/C Dimension	R12 750
.338win	T/C Venture	R13 850
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9mmP	Taurus PT111 Pro	R 7 870
9mmP	Taurus 917C	R 9 920
9mmP	S & W Shield	R13 090
9mmP	S & W SD9VE	R 7 880
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9mmP	Glock 19	R11 400
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.243	Tikka	R11 500
.243	Musgrave	R12 500
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.308	with scope	R13 950
.308	Voere	R 7 500
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.308 Win	Sauer & Son 200 with	R27 500
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.30-06	"Classic"	R 8 500
.30-06	Thompson/Center	R11 500
.30-06	Parker Hale	R11 500
.30-06	Sako	R18 500

RIFLES - USED

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.300 WSM	Musgrave	R11 500
.300 Win Mag CZ		R14 500
.375 H&H	Winchester	R13 500
.375	Mausers Exp 9,5	R 7 500
.375 H&H	Steyr with Scope	R29 800
.378	Brno	R16 950
8x57	Obendorf Mauser	R 4 500
9.3 x 62	FN	R14 500
.30/06	Brno	R12 500
.270	Musgrave	R11 500
8 x 60	Brno	R14 500
8 x 60	Brno	R14 500
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The Old Bull

by **THINUS STEYN**

A COLD FRONT was blowing in from the south and the icy wind on the Free State plains was unpleasantly strong. I love hunting, but on a day like this, I would rather have been at home. However, I had a ration quota to fill, so I headed for a certain sheltered valley, hoping to find some animals hiding there from the wind.

AT THE VALLEY entrance stood a couple of strangely twisted Karee trees. Leaving my bakkie, I took my rifle and shooting sticks and set off. It was like stepping into a different world: the open grass plains gave way to stands of *taaibos* and sweet thorn trees, and the wind, while still strong, had lessened noticeably. Within ten minutes I saw something white. My binoculars revealed it to be a springbuck, several springbuck actually, with a couple of blue wildebeest among them. They were about 300m away – too far for a shot in this wind. Roughly midway stood a large bush; using it as cover, I moved closer. The wind was blowing diagonally across my front, strongly enough to hide any noise I made – the enemy had become my ally – at least for a while.

USING COVER where available, crawling on hands and knees where not, I managed to get within 150m. The animals were slightly below me; from the sitting position I could see only their heads. I would have to stand, but at least I had the shooting sticks. I set them up close to a large *taaibos* and then looked through the binoculars. The animals were spread over a fairly wide grassy area dotted with large bushes. The two wildebeest visible were cows and probably pregnant; a bull would be preferable. Another wildebeest stepped from behind a *taaibos*, its head down in the grass. I watched it through the binoculars for what



Blue wildebeest: Africa's tough guy.

seemed like an hour. Its large body had me thinking it was a bull but I wasn't sure. Finally it raised its head: it was a bull. My old bull!

I HAD FIRST SEEN the old bull more than two years earlier, on an even colder day in May. I sat strapped into the rear seat of a doorless Bell Jet Ranger helicopter, skimming over the flats and plateaus and hugging the contours of the mountains, seemingly low enough to touch the ground at times. Participating in a game census by chopper is always interesting, exhilarating and occasionally downright scary, but my sharpest memory is of the bitter cold – the kind that penetrates right to the bone.

As the helicopter crested the mountain and the ground fell away below, a herd of wildebeest was running away from us across the plateau. Bringing up the rear was a lone bull which, for a moment, I thought must be a new

world record. But as we roared over him, I saw that his right horn was deformed. Instead of curling upwards and rearwards, it grew straight out sideways, looking almost like an axe-handle stuck to his head. I badly wanted to hunt that bull, but I knew that, while possible for me to get up there, it would be impossible to get the carcass down the mountain to the reserve headquarters. Then the pilot said something about a small group of

fluffy antelope which had run out from below the aircraft and I was counting game again.

I HUNTED FOR that bull as often as I could during the following year and saw

him twice. On the first occasion, a herd of wildebeest I had spooked ran up a mountain slope, and I saw the old bull running at the back of the herd. The next time, I was out checking an electric perimeter fence; I stopped in a little wooded valley to check a trouble spot,

*As we roared over
him, I saw that
his right horn was
deformed*

Author with old bull.



and was about to alight when I saw a blue wildebeest bull walking into a clearing less than 100m away. As I focussed my binoculars, four more bulls walked into the clearing and the last one was the old bull. He stopped and stood broadside, looking at me. I could easily have rested my Howa .300 over the Land Cruiser's side mirror and shot him, but I wanted to hunt him ethically, and hang his horns proudly on my wall. I watched him walk through the clearing until the trees swallowed him up.

DURING THE NEXT game census we did not see the old bull, and I thought he may have died. I'd had such an experience several years earlier. Throughout two seasons, and with a series of clients, I'd hunted a crafty, narrow-horned old kudu bull. My second client of the first season took a shot at the bull but missed. That kudu became an obsession, but despite our seeing him several times, we never got another shot at him. At the start of the third season I found him dead in a kloof. The carcass was too decayed to determine the cause of death but I don't think he'd been shot. I wasn't unhappy – in a way, the bull had won.

Now, on this biting cold, windy afternoon, the old bull was back, and within reach. I rested the fore-end of the 6.5x55 on the shooting sticks. The bull was facing me at an angle, his head down in the grass again. The wind pushed against my body, making the crosshairs waver alarmingly. To get the

bullet into his vitals I needed to hit him on the front of his shoulder – not a large target. I wished I'd brought my .300 with me. The 6.5x55 was a fairly new acquisition; I had used it successfully on springbuck, blesbuck and warthog, but nothing larger. However, I was using a good quality bonded bullet which I felt should be sufficient. I looked away, took a couple of deep breaths, settled into the rifle again and moved the crosshair deliberately up the bull's right front leg. He looked up just then, and as the crosshair reached his shoulder, the rifle fired itself.

He spun away, his right front leg swinging uselessly as he sprinted off. The words of a friend came to mind: "The only thing faster than a wildebeest on four legs is a wildebeest on three legs". I worked the bolt, the rifle still in my shoulder, but he was gone before I could shoot again. A dozen or more wildebeest were now running away from me into a depression where I couldn't see them. I focussed my binoculars on the opposite slope where I hoped they would reappear. They did, but a long way off. I thought one looked as if it had a deformed horn, but doubt raised its miserable head as I watched them disappear. I was sure enough of the shot; the crosshairs were right where they should be when the sear broke. Could the little 6.5mm bullet have bro-

ken up on the heavy shoulder joint? Shouldn't I have foreseen that happening? It's not as if I was new at this. Now I cursed the little rifle, and then, more honestly, myself.

Mentally marking the spot where the old bull had been standing, I set off to see what could be seen. Clear, splayed hoof-marks showed where he had taken off. He had been standing beside a vehicle track when I shot him, and his tracks on the road showed drag marks at irregular intervals. There was no blood, but that's not unusual if the shot doesn't exit. None of the wildebeest I saw running up the slope was limping – at least, not that I noticed. Blue wildebeest are notoriously tough: magazines publish articles on this, and hunters around campfires and internet forums frighten each other with stories of indestructible gnus. Shoot one in a herd and suddenly they all look terminally ill. I'd been very lucky so far: I'd shot several dozen and had a problem only once... no, wait... twice. But then there was the wildebeest bull an American client shot that could

apparently live without the use of its lungs.

I followed the tracks along the road, frequently glancing ahead. I like hunting alone, but right then, an extra set of eyes would have been most

None of the wildebeest I saw running up the slope was limping

welcome. Blue wildebeest are not normally dangerous, even when wounded, but exceptions have been recorded. An experienced PH told me of a wounded wildebeest bull tossing his client into a *spekboom* bush near Kirkwood in the Eastern Cape. This is embarrassing for a PH, though his client considered it the highpoint of his hunt in Africa. Fortunately *spekboom* provides a soft landing; elsewhere it could have been a sickle bush or a buffalo thorn. Banishing these thoughts, I rounded a turn in the road and saw something dark lying in the shade of an acacia tree. Dropping the shooting sticks, I thumbed off the rifle's safety. It was the old bull. He was dead.

I've been happier, but not often. 📷

Bag It or Case It

by **BERT KIRSTEN**

SSG 42 double semi-hard gun case.



RIFLE BAGS AND CASES have been around for a long time but in recent times these necessary items have undergone marked development to meet the needs of hunters and sport shooters with specific requirements.

The humble rifle bag has undergone several changes, firstly from a rough canvas sleeve to a padded bag with a zipper, then on to a multi-purpose container with a military heritage. Current day rifle bags reflect new designs in camouflage and some now accommodate shooting accessories such as magazines, ammunition and other necessities in additional pouches. The most important development in the gun case industry is the construction material which has changed from the traditional wood and leather to near indestructible designs in aluminium and modern plastics. That said, there still are some tried-and-tested traditional rifle bag and case designs on the market. Rifle bags usually consist of softer material and padding, hence do not offer the same protection as a hard case.

The choice of rifle bag or case will largely rest on the shooter's purpose for it, and his preference based on experience.

Rifle bags are for hunters and shooters who like to travel light. A bag does not take up as much space as a hard rifle case, which is a consideration when two or more hunters share a vehicle to the hunting ground. However, you need to be careful of where and how you pack the rifle bags in the vehicle or trailer. Do not let the rifle bag rest on its side or with the optics downwards to knock against a vehicle's body. Pack a rifle bag tightly with the handles up-over and make sure that no other items are loaded on top.

Buffalo leather shotgun bag.



For safety reasons, when on the shooting range, sport shooters must carry their rifles bagged. The firearms are only taken out when on the firing line, under the supervision of the safety official. During big-bore shooting com-

petitions, lugging around a large, heavy calibre rifle can be cumbersome. Adding a heavy rifle case might just chip away your competitive edge and does not make sense.

In South Africa most hunting rifles travel to the hunting farm in simple, well-padded rifle bags. Choosing a rifle bag requires some thought. You need to know the overall length of the firearm and the optics mounted on the rifle before buying a bag. A rifle bag must be able to accommodate a cleaning rod. Take a cleaning rod for emergency use. I've experienced an extractor failure during a hunting trip to Namibia. The cleaning rod, tucked away in a rifle bag, saved the day as it was used to bump out the empty case after each shot. Cumbersome yes, but it worked.

Modern bags are made from durable material such as rip-stop canvas. Heavy duty zippers open the bags all the way down and some carry bags now accommodate gear such as bipods, earmuffs and additional ammunition. The

padding on these bags has increased to about 2" in thickness on either side to protect the rifle. Some rifle bags accommodate two rifles for shooters on the competition circuit. These bags must not only be able to hold a firearm

securely, but also accommodate additional competition equipment such as magazines, ammunition and one or two necessities such as a bottle of water, earmuffs and shooting glasses.

Whatever bag or case you choose, keep it simple. Decide what will work for your particular needs. A bag should give you peace of mind during the travel stage in preventing scratching and should be impact resistant, light and easy to manage. Rifle bag designers should consider a move away from standard rifle profiled bags. Bags that do not look like rifle bags would not attract unwanted attention in public places. Even one that looked more like a golf bag would be a step forward.

Let's look at a few of the bags and cases available.

NC STAR RIFLE BAG

The Chinese company NC Star manufactures equipment for the airsoft and paintball industry but the gear can be used by hunters and shooters. This basic rifle bag is a modern example of the rifle bag we all grew up with and is available in different lengths up to 42 inches. The bag has a shoulder strap for easy carry and pouches for gear such as magazines, ammunition and earmuffs. The price is from R250. Available at www.bntonline.co.za.

SSG 42 DOUBLE SEMI-HARD GUN CASE

Safari & Outdoor offers a double rifle bag made of durable outer material. The outside padding is approximately two inches thick, while the inner partition can be removed to turn the bag into a single rifle bag. A single-only rifle bag in the same design is also offered. The bags are available from about R1 285 at Safari & Outdoor.

BUFFALO LEATHER SHOTGUN BAG

Shotgun bags are not as thickly padded or as wide as rifle bags due to the absence of optics. Still, protecting the woodwork and engraving is an important priority for shooters. Many different types and models of shotgun bags are available in a wide price range. This

buffalo leather shotgun bag is worth a mention due to its crafted durability. It will protect your investment to and from any sporting range for generations. It is available from R1 800 at www.safariandoutdoor.co.za.

NC STAR DOUBLE RIFLE DRAG BAG - TACTICool

This carry bag has its origins in the military. Military gear and equipment is tested in extreme conditions and will most likely function very well in the hunting field. One of the tactical rifle bags available to hunters is the so-called "drag bag", made from a strong canvas material. This bag can accommodate two rifles and has three outside pockets for equipment. Filling the bag with two rifles and enough gear makes it very heavy to carry, but the backpack shoulder straps will help with the load. However, the bag also has a single shoulder strap, but on my particular bag this tore out of the seam, causing it and its contents to fall to the ground, so we must presume that the single strap is not intended for maximum load. It sells for about R875. Available at www.bntonline.co.za.

CONDOR SHOOTER'S MAT (DUAL PURPOSE RIFLE BAG)

Some rifle bags are multi-purpose and this is one of them. After my experience with the drag bag's single strap I wanted a sturdy rifle bag intended for one rifle only, but one that did not "look" like a rifle bag because I don't want my new rifle bag to attract too much attention in the vehicle at traffic lights or at filling stations. The nondescript and square Condor Shooter's Mat fitted the bill perfectly. The bag opens up completely to become a shoot-



ing mat and also has back pack type shoulder straps. I prefer not to load its internal removable pouches with equipment. It costs about R2 170 and is available at www.gicombatsupplies.co.za.

EBERLESTOCK GUNRUNNER RIFLE BACKPACK



In South Africa we rarely conduct hunts where we spend days on our own, trekking with a backpack to some remote hunting area. However, for those lucky enough to enjoy such outdoor experiences, here is a backpack with a built-in rifle bag. The Eberlestock rifle backpack allows other outdoor gear and a rifle to be comfortably carried. The bag is high quality and costs about R2 900. Available at www.safariandoutdoor.co.za.

In contrast, modern rifle cases are mainly used to transport rifles and equipment during long journeys. These cases have foam layers inside to cushion the equipment against rough handling during travelling. The foam used can be the eggshell type or harder foam that can be profile cut to accommodate a tight fitting firearm with accessories. Pelican cases have for instance three layers of high density foam, of which the middle layer is cut to fit perfectly around the firearm. Most good quality rifle cases are dust proof, water tight and incorporate o-ring seals or gaskets in the lid. Cases used for air travel must have strong, rigid sides and be lockable to prevent unauthorised access. These cases can also have other features, such as sturdy wheels. These rifle cases are usually built to specifications set down by airlines or authorities prescribing specific requirements in this regard.

The quality of hard plastic cases differs. Cases approved for military use are extremely strong and will take the full

weight of a bakkie. Other cases are not as strong, but will give better protection than a rifle bag. Entry level rifle cases do not usually provide secure locking systems. Their hinges and overall rigidity would also not survive the heedless handling of luggage during an extended trip. However, cases are more durable. Once during a culling operation I was with a professional hunter who drove over some very rough terrain at high speed in pursuit of a wounded blesbuck. Strapped to the roof of the hunting vehicle, in a hard case, was his Ruger No 1 in .375H&H. When he finally brought the vehicle to a sudden halt, he jumped out, took out the rifle in a flash and ended the running animal's suffering with one of the most amazing shots I've ever seen, so these cases earn their keep.

Let's look at a few of the products available.

ALPINE UPRIGHT DOUBLE RIFLE CASE

South African company Alpine makes cases that are extremely rigid and conform to the most stringent of airline requirements for rifle transportation. Their cases can be locked with two external padlocks, as well as two internal lock mechanisms. The Alpine cases are equipped with a bracket on one corner to which a chain and padlock can be attached. You can lock valuables inside and secure the case to a camp bed, burglar bars or another immovable object

around camp while out in the bush. Alpine cases are also equipped with an internal o-ring gasket to keep out moisture and dust. The rifle cases available from Alpine come in several different configurations. The case I owned stored two rifles, in an upright position, with additional storage space in the lid. They cost from R5 980 (excl VAT). Contact them at www.alpinecases.co.za.

SKB FREEDOM DOUBLE RIFLE CASE OR I-SERIES OLIVE DRAB SINGLE RIFLE CASE



SKB has more than 35 years' experience in manufacturing protective cases. The company started off making cases for music instruments, but eventually branched out into making cases for the US military. The two cases mentioned here are from the same company, but differ in design. The i-Series is military orientated with a much stronger design. The other case is designed more for the hunting and sport fields.

They sell from about R3 800 and are available at www.safariandoutdoor.co.za.

VANGUARD OUTBACK 62C (CAMOUFLAGED)

Vanguard is a company that produces many products for the shooting and hunting market. They make a wide range of hard cases including the Outback 62C, which is airline approved. It is lockable with a high density foam interior. They cost from R2 900 and are available at www.zimbibooks.com.

TUFFCASES 113TC3513 RIFLE CASE

Tuffcases by Creative

Product Solutions accommodate rifles and all other associated paraphernalia. Although not manufactured locally, the cases are of good quality and compete favourably with cases at the higher end of the market. The cases are dust proof and water tight. They cost from R3 512,65 (incl VAT). Look for them at www.tuffcases.co.za.



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TRADE ENQUIRIES WELCOME!

It Started with Pigeons

by **GEOFF WAINWRIGHT**

THESE DAYS, my mind often shuttles back sixty-odd years to when I was a young rascal raised in Zambia, in the tin-roofed towns of Kitwe Nkana and Mufulira. Copper was the lifeblood of this wonderful country. I spent my primary school years in Kitwe Nkana, where my father, a retired crocodile-hunter, opened a sporting goods shop named Sports Corner. Our house nestled on the banks of the Kitwe stream where I hunted small creatures that rustled in the grass, using my first air rifle, a BSA.

When I reached my teens, our family relocated to Mufulira, where my father managed the sports department for a store called Mackalends. Weekends and holidays I spent hunting and fishing, accompanied by scruffy village urchins.

Our favourite quarry was turtle doves and green pigeons. On the outskirts of the town was a neglected softball pitch, now overgrown and bordered by bush. On one edge of the field, a water pipe had leaked to form a miniature wetland with lush vegetation, inviting wildlife to the clusters of tall grass and bull-rushes. The air vibrated with bird song.

DOVES, PIGEONS, masked weavers, red bishops, blue wax-bills, pied manikins and fire finches came in their numbers to drink. Above the shallow water hovered dragon flies, bees, wasps and butterflies.

Carrying my air rifle, I made my way toward the little oasis. Marksman pellets rattled in a tin in my pocket, and I held a few under my tongue for

quick loading. Three *bafana* (young black boys) appeared, covered in dust, having walked from their nearby village. I had learned to speak fanagalo or chilapalapa – a mixture of English, Afrikaans, Zulu and other African dialects which was the lingua franca of the migrant mineworkers of South Africa. I greeted them and they beamed cheerfully. To make an occasional few shillings, these raggedly-dressed youths trapped birds to sell to avian collectors, while their fathers toiled in the bowels of the earth, drilling for copper.

WE CREPT into some low bush to hide among the fretwork of shadows that covered the ground. We had high hopes of shooting turtle doves. I sat with my air rifle across my lap and listened to the breeze rustling the leaves. One of the boys dozed off. As time ticked by we began to fidget. A honey-bee buzzed in and landed on the sleeve of one of the boys. With mischief all over his face, he caught it between his fingers and lowered it to his dozing friend's bare leg. Pointing its curling abdomen downwards he pressed it against the boy's flesh, and it promptly sank its sting into his skin. The poison instantly worked and the boy jerked awake, kicking out at the perpetrator. We all laughed as the victim plucked the tiny sting from his skin and rubbed the spot. Then silence reigned again, but for the distant clatter of a truck on its way to Makambo, the Congo border post.

As time oozed by, one of the boys dug into the pocket of his torn shorts and produced a handful of roasted peanuts. As he ate them, mouth open



Cape turtle dove.
Photo by Philip Huebsch.

and lips smacking, a red-billed hornbill – more beak than bird – fluttered in to land directly above his head. Ever so slowly, he looked up, eyes fixed on it. The hornbill peered suspiciously down at us, as if we were intruders. With what seemed like devilish impudence, the bird ejected a short, bullet-like stream of poop which spattered on the youth's nose and lips. Shocked, the boy spat out the half-chewed nuts, wiped his face and cursed. Our hidey-hole shook with laughter as he sulked off to the water's edge, washed his face and drank.

SUDDENLY, he whistled a few low notes as he pointed toward the edge of the bush. Feeding towards us was a brace of red-necked francolin. Little puffs of dust rose as they scratched the ground to peck at insects. My hands trembled with excitement. I had never yet shot a big gamebird. Like a ghost, the boy vanished deep into the bull-rushes. The francolin took to the air, gliding low over the ground to land close to the water's edge. They paused for a few

the cocking lever against its spring. I took a pellet from my mouth, pushed it into the chamber, and turned the little tap to align chamber and bore. A porthole-like gap in the bush provided a wide view of the scene. The boys shuffled closer to watch, bumping heads as I aimed at the closest bird. My father's words rang in my ears; "If you can't be sure of a killing shot, don't shoot!"

I managed to get the rifle perfectly still, took careful aim and squeezed the trigger. The air rifle went off with typical sound, combining a vibrating bleat with a *foosh!* The pellet found its mark. The francolin staggered, then took off, wings beating loudly as it struggled low over the softball pitch. My stomach turned leaden, the boys' chorus of "Missed!" adding to my disappointment. Then the bird ploughed into the grass in a flapping, bouncing frenzy of wings. We crashed out of hiding to retrieve it. Just as I reached the fallen bird, it took off again. We gave chase, shouting excitedly. Then, as it lengthened the gap between us, we gave up and stood watching.

I BEGAN TO regret my actions. Should I have declined to shoot? Perhaps my eagerness to bag my first 'proper' gamebird had clouded my judgement. Then the bird suddenly crashed to the ground and lay still. I took off, long legs pumping. Reaching it, I picked up the dead bird with trembling hands, a wide smile on my face. Lungs heaving, the others gathered around. We sat down and took turns to examine it. We spread the wings, felt the sharp spurs, and admired its clean, soft lines.

Returning to our hidey-hole we continued our watch, and as the day progressed I shot two turtle doves. We left in silence, each youth clutching a dead bird.



The author at two years old (left) and as a young boy.



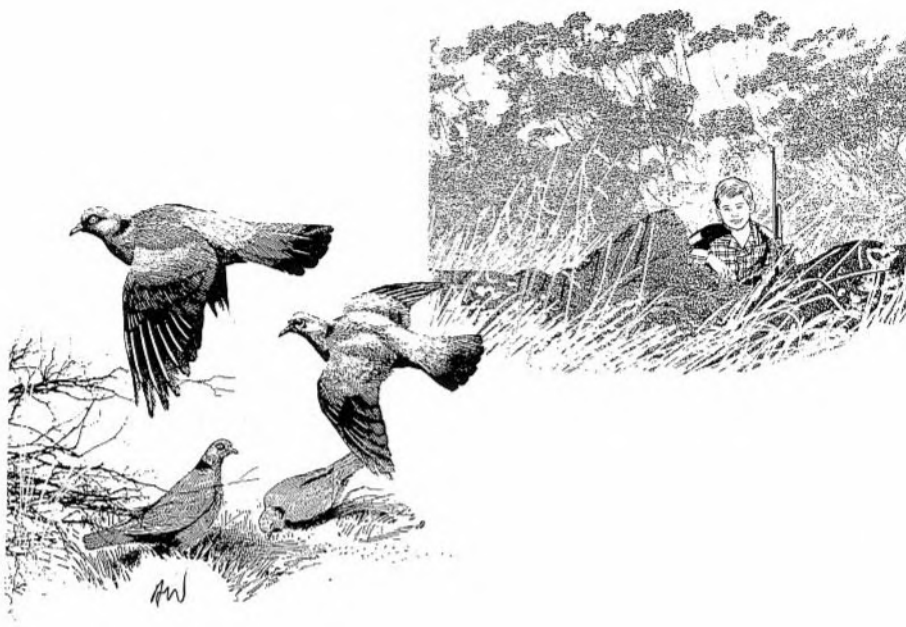
Green pigeon.

seconds to look anxiously around then scurried down to drink.

The range was not more than fifteen yards. My air rifle was big and heavy, and I had to rest the butt on the ground so I could use my back muscles and not just my puny arms as I strained to pull

One of the boys was in the lead with his catapult slung around his neck and my air rifle over his shoulder, carried with an air of proud responsibility. We filed along a footpath at a leisurely pace and soon came within sight of the towering crown of a giant fig tree. Like all members of the fig family, it has a specific fig wasp that performs the role of pollinator. And, at this time of year, these fig trees attracted green pigeons. We would need to split up in order to hide and remain completely concealed. I took back my air rifle and told two of the boys to creep away behind the big roots and sit quietly in the deepest shade.

Bent low, the third boy and I stalked beneath a canopy of dense undergrowth to reach a tree trunk which was hidden by aerial roots. The trunk had markings where villagers had cut into it for latex sap, to make bird lime. In this cave-like clearing was a primitive hearth of fire-blackened stones. The ground was



littered with rotting figs and their pungent smell filled our nostrils.

After a while I heard the sound of fluttering wings and the low, lilting growls of green pigeons fighting over the ripe figs. I peered up through gaps in the leaves and branches, but even with my keenly trained eyes, I battled to find my quarry. Each green pigeon was perfectly camouflaged against a background of green and gold, and almost entirely obscured by leaves. As I searched, a feather floated down. A slight movement caught my eye and I found the give-away pink feet that betrayed the bird's plump, feathered body.

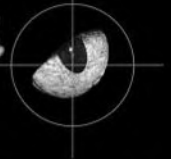
THE PIGEON was hanging upside down, head moving back and forth as it pecked and swallowed. Very slowly I pointed the barrel upwards and aligned the sights as best I could in the shaded gloom. When I was certain of what I was looking at amid the foliage, I took aim and squeezed off the shot. The pellet found its mark with a soft thump. A couple of feathers floated away as the green pigeon tumbled down through the branches. Hastily, I strained to work the cocking lever, quietly snapped it closed and fumbled a pellet into the chamber in the hope of getting a second shot. Then, for a long, tense moment I remained absolutely motionless. As the canopy fell silent I

searched over the barrel, eyes straining to penetrate the foliage.

Then a pigeon came fluttering softly in to land on a lower branch. To take the shot, I had to step into a shaft of dust-filled sunlight. As I did so, the big bird peered down, head to one side. It was about to fly off again when I fired. Mortally wounded, it went into a flapping frenzy, beating its wings while tumbling down through the branches. Its fall was arrested by twigs, and its death struggles seemed to get it more deeply entangled. For a few seconds it hung suspended as the twigs sagged, then it dropped to the ground. I stepped forward and chaos followed as the tree-top exploded with the frenzy of panic-stricken birds. Their wings beat loudly against the leaves as the flock broke free and took flight, leaving my heart pounding.

THE COMMOTION was the signal our friends were waiting for. Within seconds, they bolted past us in childlike excitement and each scrambled for a pigeon. However, our quota for the day was not yet filled so we padded from fig tree to fig tree and hunted until there was no longer enough light to aim. Then we made a small fire and sat in a tight circle as we roasted and ate our birds. Satiated, we young pioneer hunters plodded our weary way home... home from the hill. 

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Bolt-Action Shotguns

by TOM CACECI

The Dreyse 'Needle Gun' gave the Prussians a significant tactical edge in the War of 1870, and is considered the great-grand daddy of all modern bolt-action rifles. Image courtesy the National Rifle Association Museum.

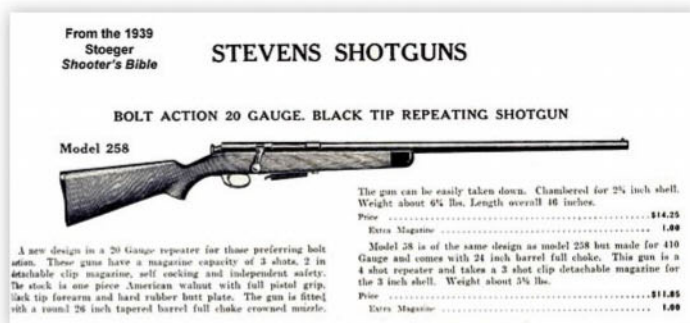
I'M A FRUSTRATED mechanical engineer, born without a maths gene, but nevertheless, I have a strong sense of what is fitting and right. The concept of 'form following function' has always had a powerful hold on me. Consequently I have a deep affection for plain-vanilla, work-a-day guns. I like *all* guns and appreciate the beauty of the high-dollar ones, but there isn't anything I might do with a \$2 000 or \$20 000 gun that can't be done with a \$200 one. To my mind, there's a certain value in utilitarian design, in and of itself. Utility grade guns are, well, tools, and nothing more. And as is generally true of most well-designed and well-made tools, there isn't anything on them that is not devoted to the purpose they are intended to serve.

While I'd certainly *like* to own a custom-fitted Purdey or Holland & Holland shotgun, I'm not about to take such a thing out in a muddy duck-blind or into the woods. At a Safari Club International Show, I once saw, on a pedestal (where it certainly belonged) a Rigby double rifle going for a fire-sale price... which was more than I had paid for my house. No way was I going to handle that gorgeous piece of hardware lest I damage it, or worse, grow too fond of it. Not even in my most hysterical fit of rationalization could I justify spending that much money on a rifle.

Of all the various types of utility-grade guns, I like shotguns the best – most especially bolt-action shotguns. The bolt-action shotgun can be



A trio of typical bolt-action shotguns. The top two are in 20 gauge, the lower is a 12. If a man could have only one gun, a bolt-action shotgun wouldn't be a bad choice. It will handle both shot and slugs and is suitable for nearly all upland field situations that don't require a rapid second shot. Two of these guns are fitted with adjustable chokes that do nothing for their looks, but enhance their utility: the shooter can select anything from Cylinder to Extra Full choke simply by turning a collar.



Surplus Model 1898 Mauser actions were used as a basis for making utility-grade sporting shotguns by several German companies. Germany was prohibited from manufacturing 'weapons of war' by the Treaty of Versailles, but shotguns, even ones built on rifle actions, were not included in the ban.

rifles. When the Dough boys came home from 'Over There' they represented a marketing opportunity for an industry that badly needed one.

US arms makers had ramped up for war production, but the war had ended just about the time they'd worked the kinks out of their mass-production methods. They

needed new products, and fast, to recoup their investment and stay in business. The first post-WWI sporting rifles presented no exception to the axiom that all sporting rifles are derivatives of military designs: Winchester and Remington quickly shifted their assembly lines to turn out modified M1917s in sporter dress, and smaller manufacturers began sniffing out opportunities too.

regarded as the poor relation of the more elegant sporting weapons; while it's more-or-less an American phenomenon, it first evolved in Europe.

The bolt-action, *per se*, is a European concept, dating to the mid-19th Century. Its earliest forms were the famous Prussian 'Needle Gun' and the early Vetterli rifles. Various European nations adopted bolt-action rifles using self-contained ammunition as early as 1869, but it took until the turn of the 20th Century for the US Army to do the same. In 1892 they adopted the Krag (designed in Norway) as a short-lived general issue rifle, replacing it in 1903 with the Springfield, a modified Mauser.

IT'S AXIOMATIC that whatever rifle a nation's military forces use eventually becomes popular with sportsmen. The US Army's neglect of bolt-action designs meant such rifles remained unfamiliar to American civilians until just before World War I. Around that time, Sears, Roebuck and other mail-order houses began selling surplus Swiss Vetterli rifles by the shipload. Nevertheless the quintessentially 'American' sporting rifle of the 19th and early 20th Centuries was the lever-action. It was a symbol of America, along with the Bald Eagle and Uncle Sam.

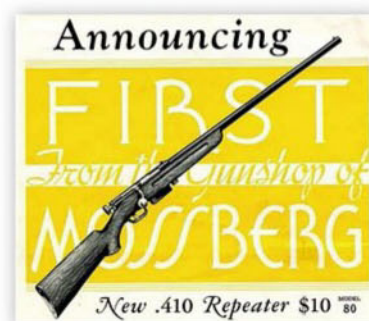
Of course, change was inevitable. The US entered WWI in 1917 and by war's end, several million men had passed through the Army's training camps. There they trained on, and became comfortable with, bolt-action

THE PRECISE DATE of introduction of bolt-action sporting shotguns is a matter of debate, but they originated in Europe – as had the bolt-action itself. At that time, firearms ownership was comparatively widespread with few restrictions. A shotgun was a part of virtually every rural household. Even so, double-barrel shotguns were so prevalent in Europe that bolt-action versions might never have been developed at all, except for one thing: the Treaty of Versailles.

The victorious Allies had imposed on Germany a series of harsh restrictions intended to forever squash the possibility of renewed aggression. Among these was a prohibition on the manufacture of 'implements of war', including rifles. Germany and the other Central Powers had disposed of millions of troops in the

Above: By the late 1930s bolt-action shotguns had become popular thanks to their low price, reliability and versatility: in a strapped economy these were real concerns for buyers. This page from the 1939 Shooter's Bible (an annual catalogue by the Stoeger company) advertises a Stevens Model 258, one of the most successful designs. The Stevens guns used a box magazine, as did Mossbergs.

Below: The repeating model of the .410 bolt-action. Some variant of this gun was made well into the 1980s. Mossberg also made bolt-actions in 12, 20 and 16 gauges.



Great War, and therefore had millions of rifles on hand. Some of these went as war reparations; some were destroyed, but millions of Model 1898 Mausers remained in hand. Not just used rifles either; there were plenty of new actions which had never been assembled into complete weapons. The M1898 Mauser was already widely regarded as a prime platform for a sporting rifle, but the European market could absorb only so many of these. The 'leftovers' were worth nothing more than scrap metal prices unless some use could be found for them. Consequently many were modified into shotguns, which weren't 'implements of war' as defined in the Treaty, and which could be produced without contravening it.

These inexpensive shotguns were sold domestically to German citizens who needed a utility firearm, to various

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This 1932 advertisement for a Harrington & Richardson 'Gamester Deluxe' bolt-action shotgun is from the heyday of the design. At \$33.95, it was at the high end of the price range. The Gamester Deluxe is fitted with an adjustable choke and a 'Mulno Sighting Dome', a form of rear sight. It was invented by Lester Mulno, one of H&R's designers. The Gamester has a tubular magazine concealed inside the forestock, holding two more shells for a total of three shots.

export markets, ex-German colonies, anywhere a viable outlet existed. At that time, America's sporting shotgun market was almost entirely served by double-barrelled and single-shot break open types, and a few home-grown pumps and auto-loaders. But that was about to change.

In those long-gone days there was hardly a home in America that didn't have some sort of gun in it. Despite the symbolism and emotional significance of the rifle, shotguns were by far the most important and widely owned firearms in the USA, as in Europe. They were essential for shooting rabbits in the cabbage patch and groundhogs in the garden; for defending home and hearth, and occasionally for convincing a daughter's reluctant swain that marriage was a good idea.

Examining the mail-order catalogues of the period between the Civil War and WWI is an enlightening exercise. Double shotguns, most of them made in Europe, were by far the dominant action type, and sold at all levels of price and quality. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of doubles had been shipped from Europe before and after the Civil War to serve the needs of westward expansion and settlement into the Mississippi drainage and later across the Great Plains. American manufacturers also provided low-cost break-actions in copious quantities. But the stage was set for the bolt-action shotgun's entry into the market; these had proved practical, and a significant new market segment was waiting to be served.

In 1919, Mossberg opened for business. This innovative company would come to earn a reputation for thinking outside the box, and for serving the entry-level sporting gun market with reasonably priced, dependable firearms. It was perhaps inevitable, then, that Mossberg would introduce the bolt-action shotgun to America: and do so at a time of great economic turmoil.

Rather than adapt an existing action as had been done in Germany, Mossberg chose to design an entirely new gun that could be produced at low cost. Their advertisement read: "A single-shot bolt-action to meet the increasing demand for a really good shotgun at a popular price", a succinct description of their first bolt-action shotgun, the Model G in .410 bore – then a new chambering. The Model G was introduced in 1932, at the very nadir of the Great Depression, yet it was a success and was followed by new, improved versions.

The tough economic times may have actually helped sales of these humble utility guns. Pump and autoloading shotguns were pricy and the supply of cheap doubles was drying up as European nations struggled to recover from the war. Mossberg touted their bolt-action shotguns as durable, practical and useful, but quite inexpensive. Mossberg made bolt-action shotguns in popular gauges for many years. They also sold their guns in huge numbers as 'private label' items bearing the trademarks of the great mail-order houses and many smaller retailers. Mossberg's production of bolt-action shotguns continued into the 21st Century.

When the Swiss Army adopted the Schmidt-Rubin pattern of rifles in 1889, their surplus Vetterli's were sold wholesale to American mail-order houses. These beautifully made rifles were the first experience many American farmers and ranchers had with bolt-actions: even though of very high quality, they were sold at nearly scrap metal prices. But it was not until after World War One that bolt-actions really took hold in the US sporting market.

A HIGH POWER 6-SHOT SMOKELESS BIG GAME REPEATING RIFLE FOR ONLY \$7.25.

\$7.25

A RIFLE FOR BIG GAME.

A HIGH POWER RIFLE AT A LOW PRICE.

We have purchased from the Swiss Government for cash a large quantity of genuine Vetterli repeating high power rifles, such as were used by the Swiss Government and known as the model 1881, which we have transformed into sporting rifles, as illustrated above.

The Vetterli Repeating Rifles, as they came to us from the Swiss Government, weighed about 12 pounds, had 35-inch barrels and were only 12 inches from the trigger to the center of the butt plate, which is too short a stock for the average man, and we have transformed these rifles by cutting off the barrel to 26 inches, fitting new stocks, making them 13½ inches from trigger to center of butt, revamped the fore end and transformed it into a 6-shot repeating rifle weighing about 8 pounds, which is very much more desirable and balances much better and looks much better than the original Vetterli rifles when they reached us from Switzerland.

For \$7.25 we furnish this Vetterli Repeating Rifle, and 20 rounds of cartridges go free with each rifle, making an outfit ready to hunt big game at a very low price. Remember, this is not a cheap rifle. It is a rifle which originally cost the Swiss Government at least \$16.00 to make, is made from the best high grade material that money can buy, has the Mauser type bolt lever repeating action, one of the strongest bolt actions made, carries five cartridges in the magazine and one in the chamber, making it a 6-shot repeating rifle, and shoots the 41-caliber Swiss smokeless powder cartridges, which may be compared in power to the 30-30 smokeless cartridges, but the bullet is 7-16 inch diameter, weighs 300 grains and strikes a very powerful blow. You will notice the 30-30 bullet is 5-16 inch in diameter and weighs 160 grains. Remember, \$7.25 is our price for the genuine Vetterli smokeless high power rifle, and with each rifle we send 20 cartridges free; also remember, this is not the heavy, clumsy Vetterli rifle which we purchased from the Swiss Government, but is the transformed Vetterli rifle, which is much more shapely, much better balanced, longer stock, and in every way much more up to date and more desirable.

No. 6H650 Our Vetterli Smokeless High Power Repeating Rifle, with 20 cartridges. Price, per 100... (Weight, packed for shipment, about 14 pounds)... **\$7.25**

No. 6H652 Extra Smokeless Cartridges, 41-caliber Swiss, for the above rifle. Price, per 100... **\$2.00**

Mossberg's success in a difficult market convinced other manufacturers to get into the field. By 1939, Stoeger's famous yearly catalogue, *The Shooter's Bible*, listed numerous bolt-action shotguns by several manufacturers, as did the very first (1944) edition of *Gun Digest*. Repeating versions soon followed the early single-shot models.

In 1934, the Federal government had mandated a three-shot limit for waterfowl – this appears to be the reason virtually none of the repeaters hold more than three rounds.

The farmer whose old gun had worn out, the city dweller whose son wanted a 'new' gun for Christmas, the soldier returning without much money: all could make a far worse choice than a homely, unpretentious but effective shotgun. Serialization wasn't required until 1968, so nobody really knows how many have been made and sold, but it is surely in the tens of millions. Private labels probably accounted for most of them. They cost a bit less than the 'name brand' even though identical in all respects but the markings. Companies like Sears Roebuck ('JC Higgins', 'Ranger'), Montgomery Ward ('Hawthorne', 'Western Field', 'Hercules') and Western Auto ('Revelation') were the largest purveyors, but other companies (Coast to Coast Hardware, Oklahoma Tire & Supply, Gamble's, Belknap Hardware, and many smaller retailers) sold them too. Most private-label shotguns were made by Mossberg or Savage, though numbers were made by High Standard and Harrington & Richardson.

ONE OF THE ASTONISHING things about older bolt-action shotguns is the quality of manufacture and materials used. One made before 1965 will more likely than not have a pretty decent piece of wood on it. My 1950 H&R 'Gamester' has a plain-grained but very nice true walnut stock, not the 'walnut finished hardwood' nowadays used on cheap guns. Back then, a stock blank with a minor blemish rendering it unsuitable for a 'good' gun was relegated to the utility category, but *all* gun stocks were walnut; that's what the customers expected, even for as little as \$20. No bolt-action shotgun has ever won a beauty contest, but for a 'lend-out' or a gun to carry behind the seat of a truck or on a boat, it has no peers. They are enduring products, frequently found at very low prices.

What are bolt-action shotguns good for? Well, more-or-less any upland application where a rapid second shot isn't needed. The advertisement introducing Mossberg's Model G shows a hunter eyeballing geese that are at least 100 yards away. This is beyond wishful thinking, even if we make allowance for the exaggeration of an advertisement. An expert shooting over decoys at short range might be able to use a .410 on ducks if he picked his shots, but he would surely need Divine intervention to achieve a killing hit on a flying Canada goose with any .410. Nor are bolt-action shotguns ideal for grouse, since fast handling is hardly their strong point. But for small upland game and maybe even pheasant, a bolt-action works just fine.

Today, some bolt-action shotguns have evolved into a 'niche' product, especially for hunting large animals in circumstances where rifles are not permitted. A bolt-action smooth-

bore is as versatile as any other shotgun, but the advent of the rifled 'shotgun' barrel has given rise to models that are dedicated killing machines for deer and boar. With the latest sabot-style slugs they're far more accurate than smooth-bored guns using 'rifled' slugs, thanks to the inherent strength and stability of a bolt-action compared to a pump or auto-loader.

Combining a strong action, rifle-style bedding, a good scope and superior ammunition, stretches the range of such 'slug guns' well beyond the 75-100 yards traditionally considered the limit for accuracy. Where only shotguns may be used to hunt big game, rifled-bores give the hunter a real edge. They're not general purpose weapons, but they're not intended to be.

Cost, durability, versatility, all these are virtues (and if you just happen to like utility guns, as I do, so much the better). As Benjamin Franklin remarked in a very different context, "In the dark, all cats are grey." In the upland game field, a bolt-action shotgun will serve you as well as a fancier gun almost all of the time. A great many – perhaps most – of those made between the World Wars are still around today, doing yeoman service for the grandchildren and great grandchildren of the men who bought them new. That, in itself, is a testimonial to their significance to the sporting shooter. 

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54" Lolgorian Buffalo

by **ROBIN HURT**



Author (left) and Dr F Karl Flick with his big buffalo.

THE 'BIBLE' of trophy big game hunting, Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game*, lists a number of superb buffalo, and the top 20 mostly came from Kenya or North Tanzania. Sadly, Kenya, which probably has the finest buffalo trophies in Africa, is now closed to hunting.

In my humble opinion, no other big game trophy is as impressive as a massively-bossed buffalo with a correspondingly wide spread – excepting, perhaps, the tusks of an enormous elephant bull.

I grew up on my mother's ranch at Naivasha in Kenya's Great Rift Valley. Our neighbouring rancher was Gilbert Colville, one of Kenya's foremost land-owners at that time. Gilbert was a kindly old man, famous for his "Djin Palace" home perched above the shore of the lake. He was also infamous, perhaps, for being one of the many husbands of Diana Broughton, later to become Lady Delamere. There was a

great scandal when the Earl of Erroll was murdered in Nairobi towards the end of World War II. Diana and Jock Delves Broughton, her husband at that time, were prime suspects in a case that remains a mystery to this day.

Be that as it may, I had enormous respect for Mr Colville. He always had time for an inquisitive boy with a passion for wildlife and hunting. From time to time, Gilbert would invite me over to his ranch "Oserian", to help shoot marauding buffalo. It was both a joy and privilege for me to be asked by such an illustrious person to help control his buffalo. Much of my school holidays were spent in the hills of Oserian and our own bordering ranch, Kibokoni, hunting buffalo with my boyhood Masai friend, Tinea. Here I honed my hunting skills. My ambition was to become a professional hunter as soon as I'd completed my education.

Gilbert had a huge buffalo skull hanging in his house. I was mesmerized by this trophy. Gilbert's Ndorobo buffalo controller had hunted it at Lariak, in Kenya's Liakipia district. The Ndorobo had killed the buffalo after it had been bayed by a pack of hounds. He'd used a 12-bore double barrelled shotgun firing a solid lead ball. Not my choice as a buffalo gun, but that Ndorobo had killed many buffalo this way. The feat must have demanded enormous courage, and point-blank range shooting.

THAT SKULL HAD massive bosses and a very wide spread, but what stands out sharpest in my memory was that, between the two bosses, on the edge of the right horn, was a large circular hole. I asked Gilbert what caused this, and he told me that the crazed and harried buffalo caught sight of the approaching hunter, broke through the pack of dogs and chased the agile Ndorobo up a nearby tree. Luckily he'd held on to the 12-bore, and from his perch, he tried to brain the buffalo as it glared up at him. Of course the soft lead ball could not penetrate that thick skull, but it caused the bull to shake his head as though stung by hornets before turning his rage back to the pack of dogs. This gave the Ndorobo time to get in a killing shot with a second solid ball just behind the bull's shoulder, which went into the lungs. The hole in the skull testified to the story.

That Lariak bull was hunted in 1957. Rowland Ward recorded its spread as 57 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, and its boss as 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. There are 20 buffalo bulls listed with spreads of over 54", and one cow with a 64" spread (the world record) from Lake Manyara in Tanzania, hunted



Left: The World Record bull buffalo, killed by lions. The skull was recovered by Manyara National Park, Tanzania, personnel in the year 2000. Official measurements: Greatest outside width, 62¾ inches. Width of boss 14½ inches.

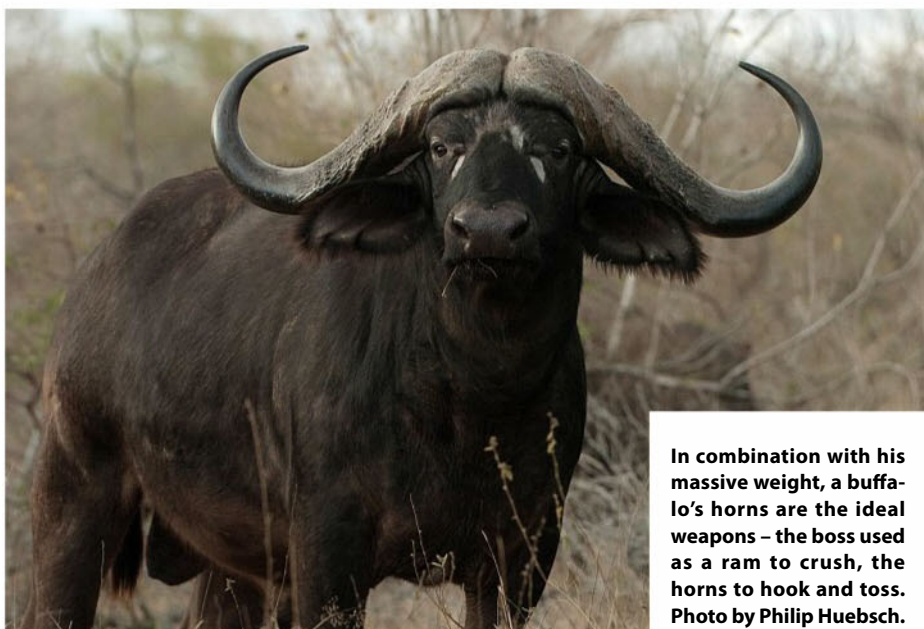
by Mr Cabrera in 1946. As a boy gazing in awe at the trophy on Gilbert's wall, I never imagined that I would one day have the opportunity to hunt a comparable monster bull buffalo in Kenya.

THE BUFFALO OF my lifetime as a PH is listed among those top 20 in Rowland Ward's. In 1973, I was fortunate to have guided my good friend and client, Dr FK Flick on the hunt for this enormous bull at Lolgorian in Kenya's Masailand. After the compulsory 3-month drying-out period, Rowland Ward recorded this trophy's spread at exactly 54 inches, and its tremendous boss at 14¾ inches, as measured by Major Johnnie Raw, Rowland Ward's official measurer in Kenya.

Karl Flick was one of my regular safari clients, and he wanted to hunt a very big buffalo bull. I knew just the place, about ten miles north of the village of Lolgorian. I had opened up an area that no one else went into, and here I found superb buffalo bulls – I never left without at least a 45 inch. Until that time, my best from that area was a bull of just under the magical 50 inches: a bull with a 49 inch spread and a massive boss of 15¾ inches, hunted by my close friend Hadelin Diericx of Mexico. I had seen even bigger bulls in the area.

WE SET UP our tented camp on the banks of the Migori river and started hunting for buffalo. Lolgorian is a forested area, with numerous open grassy glades. It was buffalo heaven. On the

third day of the safari, a small Masai shepherd boy stopped my hunting car and excitedly told me that two big buffalo bulls were lying up in a lantana thicket nearby. We loaded our rifles and followed the boy.



In combination with his massive weight, a buffalo's horns are the ideal weapons – the boss used as a ram to crush, the horns to hook and toss. Photo by Philip Huebsch.

After a short distance he pointed to the hideout with the handle of his knobbed stick. The wind was wrong, so Karl and I positioned ourselves downwind and I instructed my two trackers, Laboso and Chanchalo to deliberately allow their scent to filter into the thicket. It worked, and the two bulls bolted towards us. Both were big bulls.

ing luck we'd just had. But, we had ten days of our safari left and a third buffalo license burning a hole in our pocket. *And* we were in just the right place.

Several days later I dropped off my tracker Chanchalo to go and check a leopard bait while we hunted for other game. Driving our Toyota Land Cruiser

Below: A colossal bull photographed in the Salient area of the Aberdare Mountain National Park, Kenya, in the late 1970s, by Professional Hunter John Fletcher. The author was lucky to see this bull also, and estimated the horns to be at least 54 inches in outside width. The boss is huge, probably larger than any buffalo ever recorded. This bull disappeared shortly after these sightings, never to be seen again.



I shouted to Karl to shoot the nearest. Down it went. The other bull looked good. "Shoot him as well!" I shouted. Karl was an excellent shot on running game, a skill he had fine-tuned on driven wild boar in his home country, Germany.

We had bagged two splendid bulls: the smaller measuring just over 44" and the larger 47¾ inches. We were overjoyed to say the least. The Masai boy was suitably rewarded for his accurate information.

"Now we'll find an even bigger one," I stated, not for a minute thinking we could really improve on the amaz-

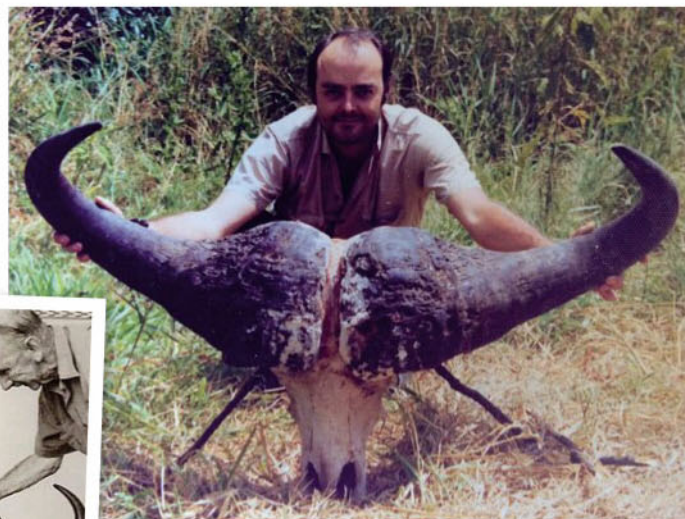
back to camp for lunch, we met Chanchalo on the road, grinning like the proverbial Cheshire Cat. My first thought was that the bait had been hit. Instead he informed us he had seen a single buffalo bull with a massive head. I enquired as to how big he thought it would be. "Much bigger than Mr Straight's 50 inch buffalo we shot on the last safari at Voi," he enthused.

NOW, CHANCHALO was an excellent and reliable judge of trophies, so I knew he had seen something special. It was exciting news! The bull had bolted into the forest, but Chanchalo hadn't followed; instead he had quietly retreated so as not to cause any further disturbance. As it was now midday and very hot, I felt the bull wouldn't run far, so I decided to continue to our nearby camp for a very quick lunch then take up the bull's tracks during the heat of the day, before he moved off. Come the cool of the evening, he would leave the forest to look for grazing. The others in camp thought we were crazy to go out in the heat of the day, but we kept mum about our plans for fear of jinxing the hunt.

The bull's tracks indicated that he'd bolted full-tilt for the forest. Karl loaded his bolt-action .458 and I my trusty William Evans .470 double. It was slow, tedious work inside the darkened forest, dim and gloomy due to the overhead tree canopy. But the two trackers were more than equal to the task and followed the spoor diligently. We startled a slumbering warthog which crashed off into the undergrowth, making us all jump.

Then I noticed we were following two bulls and not one. A quick check revealed that our bull, with his soup-plate sized tracks, had crossed with these two bulls and continued on his

The 50" buffalo taken by Hall Straight of Canada, hunted near Kasigua Mountain, Voi district, Kenya. With Mr Straight are some of Robin Hurt's team of ace Kenyan trackers: (l-r) Guyo Abajilaa, Chanchalo Guyo, Laboso Arap Sura, and Tinea Ole Kerito. All these fine trackers are no longer with us, having left for the happy hunting grounds.



Above: Hadelin Diericx of Mexico with his tremendously heavy-bossed 49 inch buffalo. Hunted with the author in the early 1970s at Lolgorian, Kenya.

Left: The late Gilbert Colville with the Lariak bull's head. He is pointing out the hole in the skull where the soft lead ball from the 12-bore failed to penetrate. The pug is buried next to his master at Nendebibi on the edge of the Eburu Forest in Kenya. Photo taken from *The End of the Game* by Peter Beard.

own course. We followed our bull for another two hours. Karl was suffering from an injured toe but made no complaint. Then Chanchalo stopped, not moving a muscle. He had spotted the bull. Slowly he stuck his tongue out of the left side of his mouth to indicate where I should look. I couldn't see anything. Then a flick of the bull's ear gave him away. I couldn't believe his size – huge in both body and horns! He lay facing away from us at a three-quarter angle, about 15 yards off, in a small grassy opening surrounded by dense forest.

"Shoot," I whispered to Karl. "I can't see him," came his anguished reply. "Lower, lower – level with your feet!" I whispered, barely able to keep calm. Slowly Karl raised his rifle and took careful aim. The bull sensed something was amiss and turned his head towards us just as Karl's shot rang out. We heard the bull's death bellow and then all went quiet in the forest. We had 'bearded the king in his den'. Composing ourselves, we examined our fallen quarry in near-disbelief. He was everything Chanchalo had described and much more! He was magnificent – no other words described him. The width of his horns exceeded the length of my .470 by a wide margin. We were all ecstatic, though this was tinged with sadness at seeing the end of such a perfect animal.

And so ended the chase that had involved over five hours of meticulous tracking, culminating in the trophy of a life time. 

*"Shoot,"
I whispered to Karl.
"I can't see him,"
came his
anguished reply.*

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Am I a true Hunter?

by KEVIN THOMAS



Brian Spradling of Denver, US, does some range work. Shooting practice is very important, but it should be done from various practical shooting positions, not just from a bench.

DURING RECENT hunting seasons, I've become somewhat alarmed by the nature of the hunting vehicles increasingly evident on our roads, seemingly fitted out to serve one purpose only: that of 'shooting platform' or 'gun-ship'. The number of customised, padded rifle-rests covering the top rails on some of them boggles the mind. A colleague of mine remarked that he'd seen 'hunting rigs' so customised they gave the impression that the client's only reason for climbing off the high-seat was to go to bed at night – after an extremely hard day of conducting 3kph vehicle-stalks around the game ranch.

This article is not intended as a treatise on tracking or bushcraft, but I do believe the sport hunter should endeavour to learn all he can about the veld and its many denizens, and how they interrelate in the ecology. He should also learn to become proficient at what we now call 'ethical walk-and-

stalk hunting' (to distinguish it from 'bakkie-hunting'). If he possesses a measure of such knowledge and skill, it will not only give him a sense of confidence and wellbeing in the veld, enabling him to enjoy the experience so much more, it will also protect him from possible danger. And he will discover far greater personal satisfaction in having successfully hunted, stalked and cleanly killed his quarry.

THERE HAS BEEN many a time in recent decades that I've been walking quietly through the thickest bush with my clients, when suddenly the tell-tale *kssss kssss* of red-billed oxpeckers alerted us to the presence of danger as they flew up from the sleeping form of a black rhino or an arthritic old buffalo bull. Their rapid and vocal departure is, of course, intended to warn their host of an approaching threat, but if you have learned this fact, and can identify the

birds and their sound, you can use it to your own advantage. A black rhino comes to its feet like a ballerina when the oxpeckers hurriedly take off.

OXPECKERS can also alert the hunter to the presence of game farther away. When in flight, their characteristic *tsik tsik* draws your attention; then you watch them, and when the flock suddenly swirls as one and drops from a height to settle, this indicates the presence of a host animal, which might be a buffalo, eland, giraffe – or rhino.

You'll find it interesting to learn such animal behaviour even if it has no bearing on your locating game or avoiding danger. For instance, the alarm calls of the bush squirrel vary according to the nature of the threat. If the danger is from the air by way of a raptor, they emit a certain distinctive call and all scurry down the tree to their holes at its base; if the threat is from on the

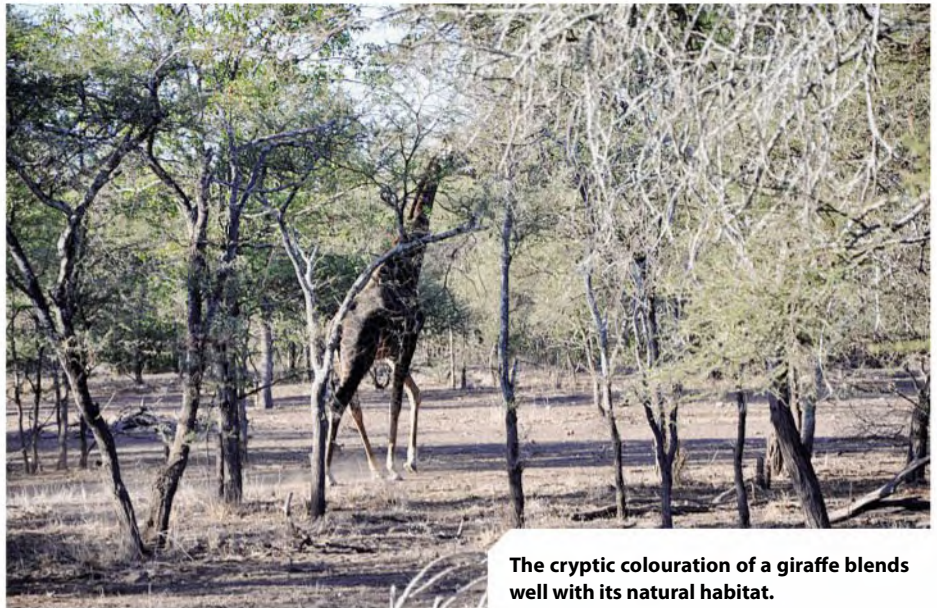
ground, they emit a different alarm call and scamper up into the higher branches. They also fiercely scold leopard, black mambas and anything else they perceive as a threat.

Where the hunting blocks form part of a vast wilderness area, much of the birdlife shows little or no fear of man. Fork-tailed drongos, in particular, fascinate me. Often, when we're walking quietly through the bush, a drongo will closely follow us, flying from tree to tree. Each time our footfalls disturb an insect, the bird quickly alights from its perch to swoop down on the insect. So focused are they, that landing right alongside a moving boot is par for the course.

ONCE, MANY years ago, while hunting on my own, I observed three fork-tailed drongos mobbing something in the ankle-high grass. They were perched on a low-hanging branch and would periodically leave their perch to hover just above the grass, loudly vocalizing before returning to their perch once more. When I went to investigate, I found they'd been mobbing a young banded cobra. A variety of birds making an hysterical racket in a thicket or the upper branches of a tree invariably indicates the presence of a snake, raptor, or owl.

If you're camped by a stream or waterhole, the hours of darkness can be interesting. If the frogs and crickets all suddenly cease chirping, it normally indicates something on the move in their close proximity. Once the threat has passed, they all become vocal again. When this happens on a moonlit night, I can't resist quietly getting up to have a look. You never know what might be on the prowl, from the smallest to the biggest of Africa's fauna.

WHEN YOU SPOT antelope or other prey-species all staring fixedly in a particular direction, this can also indicate a predator's presence – particularly so at a waterhole. Often, in the case of buffalo – especially the cows – they will periodically shake their heads vig-



The cryptic colouration of a giraffe blends well with its natural habitat.

orously while staring. They do this to try to get the object of their attention to move, so that they can identify it and decide whether it poses a threat or not.

ANOTHER THING that saddens me a little in the hi-tech era in which we now live is the advent of the GPS in the hunting and hiking context. For me, the fun has gone out of map-reading and making use of a compass, or taking a back bearing using both map and compass. Anyone who hunts, works in, or visits remote places, should know these basic skills because hi-tech gizmos can go wrong. Yes, I carry and use a GPS, but I also carry a prismatic compass in my daypack. During my years of ser-

Deep inside a hunting block, a lion pug mark (.416 Ruger cartridge for scale). Such a find would probably be missed if you are 'hunting' from a vehicle.



vice as a game ranger and later a Special Force soldier, I always found it fun to use a map and compass.

If you find yourself in a survival situation, and in need of water, game trails are an excellent indicator. If far from water, they will just be faint paths crisscrossing all over the bush, but as they lead towards water, so too, do they become more defined. In big game areas they become almost like the spokes of a wheel converging towards the hub, paths so well-worn you could ride a motorcycle on them.

A fairly common yet erroneous belief is that the only skill a sport hunter needs is the ability to shoot

Spoor of a water leguaan (Nile monitor) in a sandy riverbed.





Above: The remains of a blue wildebeest cow twelve hours after being killed by lion. Right: The imprint of a leopard that was resting in a sandy riverbed – the tail imprint is at the bottom of the photo, and the pug mark at upper right of centre.



straight. In reality, good marksmanship represents but a small fraction of the skills a hunter needs. During WWI, when the British Army finally got around to organising a Sniping Corps in 1916, they made good use of the game-keepers, guides, and men from the Scottish deer forests, and for good reason – they could stalk as well as shoot.

BEFORE A HUNTER squeezes the trigger, it is imperative that he gets within safe, sure range of his quarry without being detected, or it will become an exercise in futility. To get within such range over varied terrain, the hunter has to be a skilled stalker, and this only comes with high levels of self-discipline, patience, constant practice,

sound wind usage, and a thorough understanding of animal behaviour – not to mention above-average powers of observation.

THE AIM OF every stalk should be to get as *close* as possible to the intended quarry so as to place the bullet precisely in the vital organs with as much certainty as is humanly possible. It is not acceptable to just hunker down wherever you happen to be when you spot the animal, and take a chancy shot that may wound the animal, possibly resulting in its escaping to die a slow, painful death. Your stalk might involve crawling, butt-shuffling, rolling, keeping to deep shadow or dense brush, moving only when the animal you're stalking lowers its

head to feed, or remaining frozen and unmoving if it has its head up, staring your way.

Stalking skills can be learned and practised using any of our many wildlife species as 'quarry', including gamebirds like Egyptian geese or guinea fowl. Despite the variety of hi-tech optics and new generation bullets and powders on the market, not to mention the many flat-shooting calibres available to a hunter, shooting at long range without attempting to stalk, does not, to my mind, make you a hunter, because all you're really proving is that you have the required motor-skills to hold a rifle steady and squeeze the trigger. A 10-year-old can learn that.

The writer's last hunting rig – it was always used to access hunting areas and for recovery – never as a shooting platform when hunting. The height also allowed the trackers to spot fresh spoor.



IN EXTREMELY dense cover, and with a favourable wind, I believe a 50m shot is about max, and any good hunter should be able to stalk within that distance. When practising, don't just shoot while seated at a bench or from the prone position. Practise from various 'practical' shooting positions – offhand, kneeling, sitting, using shooting sticks, create 'tree branches' at various heights to serve as rifle rests, and so on. And while doing so, shoot seriously at targets at varying distances – you must be able to *group* your shots from these positions. Such practice, in conjunction with practising to stalk live game in the veld, will be your recipe for success. 

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Karoo Boytjies

by **ANDRÉ GERBER**

A large, leafless tree with a complex, branching structure stands in the center of the frame. The tree's branches are dark and intricate, reaching out against a clear, light blue sky. The ground is covered in tall, golden-brown grass that appears to be blowing in the wind. In the background, there is a dense thicket of thornveld, with many small, spiky branches visible. The overall scene is a typical Karoo landscape, characterized by its arid and open nature.

Dense thornveld made quiet walking
and stalking challenging.

in the Bushveld!

KUDU! WE DROPPED as if poleaxed behind the trunk of a tree. A huge kudu bull was cautiously making his appearance on the opposite edge of a clearing. Next to me was Johannes Mphago, the resident tracker. We lay dead still, not daring to move a muscle as we silently admired the bull. We were here to hunt impala, so the kudu was quite safe.

Johannes and I had been hunting since dawn without so much as glimpsing an impala. We were now halfway through that golden hour before darkness sets in, and a hush fell over the bushveld as the sun went down. It was closing time. The kudu bull was slowly making his way around the edge of the clearing – towards us. When he was about 25 metres from us, I noticed the reddish flash of impala at the spot where the kudu had first appeared. Two impala rams were browsing on the edge of the bush about 75m from where we lay. One of the rams would definitely make the book, and the sight of him had my heart thumping in my chest.

For the past three years I had been keen on taking

a big trophy impala, and now a Rowland Ward record-class ram was 75m away offering a clear shot. My problem was that I dared not move to align my rifle, as the kudu bull was now so close that he would spot the smallest movement and react, spooking the impala. We lay frozen for what seemed like hours. The bull passed by a mere ten metres from our position. By this time we were lying face down, not daring even to roll our eyes in his direction. I could imagine his statuesque form towering above us. The bull passed our position and quietly disappeared into the bush.

When we felt it was safe to look up, the scene had changed: the impala had retreated deeper into the bush. I could vaguely make out the form of one of the rams as they slowly moved further away from us, into the thicket. I concentrated intently on trying to get a sight-picture on the trophy ram, but his body was behind a *sekel* bush and I could see only the tip of one horn. Eventually the two rams disappeared into the dense bush. By then it was too dark to attempt a stalk.





The banks of the "great grey-green, greasy Limpopo river". The hunt took place 5km south of the river.

We were hunting on a property half-way between Ellisras and the Groblers Brug border post with Botswana. Geologically, the area is known as the Melinda Fault Zone, a series of east-west striking faults dividing the Waterberg coalfield (SA's largest) and the feldspar of the Limpopo belt. I was joined by my fellow Eastern-Capers Johan Grobler and his sons Johan junior and Francois, who farmed on the Bruinjieshoogte watershed that divides

the dry plains of the Camdeboo from the greener Smaldeel district of Somerset East.

WE WERE A wide world away from the East Cape's variety of hunting terrains. We had done our first hunt in the Limpopo bushveld three years earlier. Here the flat terrain and tall bushveld vegetation afforded very limited visibility, requiring painstakingly slow walking and stalking. I remember feeling

severely claustrophobic during that first bushveld hunt. I desperately wanted to see an open area in the terrain, and had to resist a constant urge to climb a tree for visibility. We had also brought inappropriate calibres for dense bushveld: two .243s, a 7x57 Ackley Improved and a 7x64. Johan now hunts here with an open-sighted .30-30 Winchester and I with a 9.3x62. We also adapted our hunting methods to embrace walking and stalking. And soon we came to love the Limpopo bushveld.



The author used a Musgrave in 9.3x62 scoped with a Kahles 3.5-10x50 to shoot his ram.

AT ONE TIME I had harboured some negative feelings for the Northern Transvaal. When I was nine years old, a cousin from Groblersdal came to visit who kept comparing the Eastern Cape with the Northern Transvaal, constantly belittling things I held dear. The last straw was his comparing East Cape kudu bulls to donkeys with horns!

I was not alone. Soon afterwards, I watched Northern Transvaal playing Eastern Province at the Boet Erasmus stadium. Northerners were giving EP a



The Waterberg coalfield is the largest remaining coal resource of South Africa.

hiding and the crowd was turning sour. A lone naartjie peel struck Naas Botha's head. That precipitated a downpour of anything citrus. The crowd went ballistic and it seemed the entire harvest of the Gamtoos Valley rained down upon the Northerns players. I kicked myself for not bringing my own naartjies.

FAST-FORWARD 25 years and I found myself living in Limpopo Province (formerly Northern Transvaal). In time, my resentfulness dissipated. I soon conceded that Pretoria's weather is generally more stable than Port Elizabeth's, and that black mambas are bigger and more lethal than *geelslange*. And yes, the northern kudu are bigger than those of the Eastern Cape. But I'll always regard the black bulls of the Eastern Cape as the most splendid of God's creatures, grudgingly awarding their northern cousins second place.

Back at camp we learned that Johan junior had shot a lovely impala ram with his 7x57. He had given up trying to stalk through the dense bush. We'd done four previous hunts on this ranch and in that time bagged only one impala ram. The ground was covered in dry leaves and twigs that made quiet

walking practically impossible, so he'd decided on a different approach. He slowly walked along the edges of bakkie tracks, keeping to the shadows and watching for game crossing the track.

Two impala rams crossed about 300m from him. It took him thirty minutes to stalk to the spot where they had crossed, and then he slowly entered the bush and crawled deeper and deeper

***I heard the faintest
sound of a twig being
broken – then I saw it***

in, hoping to glimpse the rams. He spotted them and was fortunate to find a shooting lane wide enough to allow him to place a shot behind the shoulder.

As it turned out, Johan senior would also go on to shoot a big ram, employing the same tactics. I decided to adopt Johan's approach the following day. This time I was without Johannes. Karel Kerling, the owner, had the good grace to allow us to hunt without some-

one constantly in attendance. Born and raised in De Aar, Karel had that relaxed, nonchalant air often encountered in people from the Karoo. I left camp at dawn, slowly walking along a farm track going directly west. I would stop every so often to listen and look for movement. It was a joy to be in the bush. I made a mental note to buy myself a good field-guide to the trees of the bushveld. I could identify hardly any of the trees and was the poorer for it. I felt like an illiterate in a library.

I WAS MOVING increasingly further away from camp with the sun slowly rising behind me. Game crossing the track ahead of me would have to look into the sun to detect my movement. I kept to the side of the track as I slowly made my way from shadow patch to shadow patch, pausing, listening. I was about 4km from camp when a small movement to my left caught my eye. I imagined it to be the flutter of a bird, but stood dead still watching and listening. I heard the faintest sound of a twig being broken. Then I saw it – a mere 30m from the road, the flicking tail of an impala. My shooting sticks were already open and set at



Typical Limpopo thornveld.

the correct height. I slowly shouldered the 9.3 and rested it over the shooting sticks. Through a screen of bushes I could vaguely make out the shape of two impala rams feeding, oblivious to my presence. I could hardly believe my luck; I'd waited three years for this, and now a shiver of excitement made

my feet quiver for a moment. The rams were slowly feeding away from me, deeper into a patch of thorn thickets. I had no shot.

In my mind I desperately willed the ram closest to me to turn around. Amazingly, he did exactly that and starting feeding back in my direction.

He drew closer and closer, feeding at a slight angle towards the road. I was still getting no more than glimpses of him through what looked like a scattered hedgerow of sekel bushes. Through the scope I could see a very small opening in the thorns and waited for the ram to reach this. As he got to it, he saw me and whipped his head up in surprise. It all came together. I'd been following his movement towards the gap with my finger lightly resting on the trigger. With the crosshair on his shoulder through the opening in the sekel bush, the instant he reacted I touched off the shot.

At the thump of the 9.3, the ram darted into the thickets. I waited a few moments before cautiously taking up his blood trail. I found him dead under a thorn tree 25m from where I had shot him. He lay in a broad, peaceful patch of shade: a spot where violence somehow seemed out of place. 

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Arisaka Mod 38

A Rare Piece of Militaria

by **CHARLES DUFF**



Left side of rifle showing the side scope mount and bayonet, charring due to fire clearly visible. Right: Decorative bolt shroud.



WHILE THE JAPANESE WWII arms and accoutrements were, and still are, reasonably common in the USA, they are pretty rare in South Africa. Thus when an Arisaka military sniper rifle of that era showed up in a recent consignment of arms ex-Zimbabwe, it caused some excitement and soon revealed an unusual story of how this came about.

The rifle's metalwork is in excellent condition. It is a Model 38 in 6.5x50R designed in 1907. A substantial dovetailed side-mount for a telescopic sight was fitted on the left side of the action, but the scope itself is missing. The

unusual folding monopod of sturdy 4mm diameter rod was standard for these rare sniper's weapons which were designated Model 97s. The chromed-bore 31" (787mm) barrel has very good, clean rifling. Of note is the excellent ghost-ring sight on top of the ladder rear-sight. This is equal to, if not better than any European example. The bolt-action cocks on closing, hence is a bit stiff to operate. The straight bolt handle looks a bit alien but functions well. The firing pin has been ground down, otherwise the action and 5-shot box magazine are in good condition.

The action has the Imperial Japanese chrysanthemum stamped on it, and is noted for being one of the strongest military bolt actions, if not *the* strongest. Tales of Americans modifying the 6.5x50R chamber to take the .30-06 cartridge and firing its .308" diameter bullet through the 6.5mm (.250") bore without the rifle blowing up, have been substantiated.

Unfortunately the woodwork is in a parlous state. While the right side of the stock and fore-end show the usual hard wear and tear of a jungle warfare weapon, the left side is badly charred

Close-up of action and scope mount, fire damage visible.



Left side of butt showing fire damage and mounting screw hole.





Left: Rear sight with 'ghost' rear peep sight.



Below left: Muzzle showing monopod in folded position. Note original ramrod.

Below right: Close-up of bayonet mounting.

Centre right: Breech showing Imperial Chrysanthemum motif.

Bottom right: The action opened showing the magazine's follower/ base plate.



along its full length. Two holes drilled through the stock are painfully obvious.

Research shows that the only Southern African military unit to take part in the India/Burma/Malaya campaigns was the 1st Rhodesian African Rifles. The official regimental history reveals that two RAR companies were in the vicinity of Waing in Burma and patrolling with considerable difficulty in the flat, flooding country with the monsoon rains in full spate. A patrol was engaged by the Japanese on the 6th July 1945. They withdrew to report to the company CO, who sent them back again to find out more. The Japanese re-engaged the patrol with an LMG machine-gun and a sniper. During the firefight the sniper was killed and one machine-gun operator wounded for the cost of six RAR wounded – two when a mortar bomb aimed at the Japanese hit tall bamboo and bounced back towards the patrol.

Since the Americans had the imperial chrysanthemum ground off all Japanese weapons after 1945, this Arisaka had to have been taken as a war trophy by the 1st RAR and brought back to Rhodesia by the regiment. They mounted it on the (brick) wall behind the bar in the Officers' Mess where it remained for many years, and which no doubt explains the two holes drilled through the stock. In the '70s a fire broke out in the main body of the Officers' Mess causing, among other substantial damage, the loss of all the regimental silver. As much of it had been donated by the Colonel-in-chief, Queen-mother Elizabeth, this was a catastrophic loss. This does explain the charring of the stock – the fire was on the other side of the brick wall to which the rifle was attached, and the heat scorched the wood without igniting it. However the scope probably did not survive this event.

The rifle is now owned by Hire Arms, Johannesburg, who specialise in supplying and servicing film props. They replaced the firing pin and range-tested the rifle, which proved very accurate. After a search, they located an authentic 2.5x scope costing more than the rifle. As the photos show, the ramrod/

cleaning rod is still present, as is the Type 30 bayonet with its metal scabbard. Its 15½" (393mm) single-edged blade with deep ⅞ length fuller on each side was designed in 1897 and is notable for the hooked quillon. The British army faithfully copied this design in 1907, but soon did away with the hooked part of the quillon.

With such an unusual and detailed history, it would be a sin to make any alterations, and the gun will be preserved as is. 

Hand-loading Series Part 3

What Equipment Do I Need?

by GREGOR WOODS



The RCBS ChargeMaster 1500 Powder Scale and Dispenser Combo.

THIS SERIES deals with reloading rifle and handgun cartridges, but not shotshells. Due to the worldwide popularity of clay-pigeon and wingshooting (most of which involves a *single* calibre) the vast production runs of 12-bore shotgun cartridges render these comparatively inexpensive. Perversely, the components, particularly lead shot, are disproportionately more expensive in SA than in the USA, so there is little incentive locally to reload.

Now: equipment for reloading. When you fire a metallic cartridge in any rifle or handgun, the following takes place. The firing pin dents the primer, igniting the priming compound, the flame of which flashes through the flash hole to ignite the gunpowder. The burning powder gives off gasses which expand extremely rapidly, swelling the body of the brass cartridge case until it fills the cartridge chamber. The pressure generated by the expanding gas also forces the head of the cartridge case slightly rearwards, to be stopped by the bolt-face which holds the cartridge in place (or by the breech-face or breech-block of other firearm designs). Simultaneously, the pressure generated by the expanding gas forces the bullet out of the case neck, through the grooved bore and out of the barrel at very high speed. So rapid is this gas expansion that all this takes place in the tiniest fraction



An O-type press.

of a second – because nitro or smokeless gunpowder (which burns relatively slowly if not contained) burns very rapidly under high pressure.

***Surprisingly, this
can be achieved
with a minimum of
equipment***

THE RELOADING process, in a nutshell, entails getting the cartridge back to the state it was in before you fired it. Basically, this involves exerting reverse pressure on the brass cartridge case to squeeze it back down to size, removing the spent primer and replacing it with a live one, charging the case with a fresh supply of gunpowder, and fitting a bullet into the case neck – which must grip it tightly.

Surprisingly, this can be achieved with a minimum of equipment – probably best represented by the Lee



A C-type press.

Loader. This is an ingenious little six-part toolkit that comes in a container not much bigger than a cigarette box. All you need in addition is a small plastic or wooden mallet. Each kit is cartridge-specific – one for say, .38 Special, another for .30-06, etc. (To see how it works go to www.backcountry-chronicles.com and other sites.)

THE LEE LOADER produces very accurate ammunition, and a big advantage is that you can conveniently pack it along on hunting trips to reload in camp. Many shooters with well-equipped loading benches take a Lee Loader to the shooting range for working up loads, chronographing them as they go. It is the lowest-priced complete kit available for the man who only loads for one or two calibres. Its drawback is that it is slow – it's not really for the man who reloads for several

calibres, or for the competition shooter who fires 200 or 300 shots per weekend.

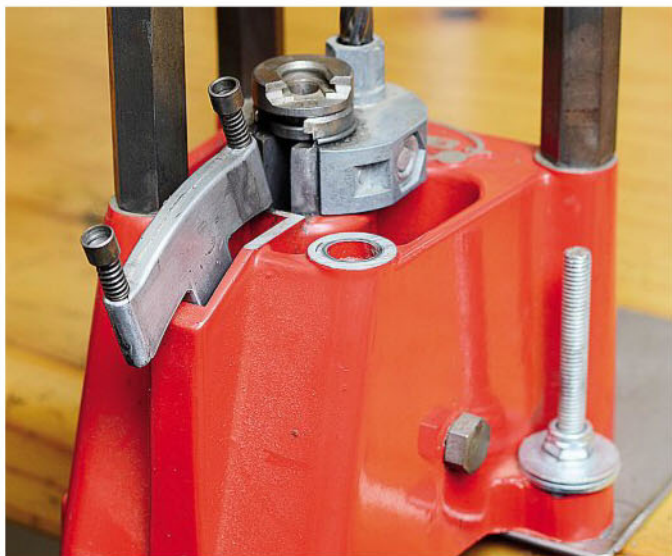
These latter categories of shooters need a bench set-up with a permanent reloading press that accepts interchangeable, cartridge-specific dies for all the various calibres they shoot.

ALL SUCH reloading presses have a lever-operated ram – an upright rod of thick, hard steel, the top end of which accepts interchangeable shell-holders (steel ring-brackets of different sizes, slotted to hold the rims/case heads of all the various cartridges). Directly above and in line with the ram, the press has a threaded receiver into which is screwed the reloading die appropriate to the cartridge being loaded. By operating the hand-lever, the ram, with the cartridge case gripped in the shell-holder attached to its top, is raised to run the cartridge case up into the die. Different dies resize and de-cap the cartridge case, bell-mouth certain cases, seat the bullet into the neck, and crimp the case mouth if required.

The bench-mounted reloading press is usually the single most costly item of equipment required. They vary widely in price according to design, size, strength of construction, and manufacturing precision (attention to concentricity, alignment, and consistency

Hand-help priming tools are best for 'feeling' the primer into the pocket.





Left: The primer assembly of a Lee Turret press. The primer guides at the ends differ in size to fit small or large primers. Right: The compact Lee Loader kit.

of operation). Take, for example, the difference between the C-type and the O-type. For the C-type, picture a steel frame in the shape of a 'C', with the ram rising through a hole in the lower arm of the C and the reloading die threaded through a hole in the upper arm of the C. Now, when the ram rises to force a large, fired (read 'swollen') rifle cartridge case into a resizing die gripped in the top arm of the C-frame, the force exerted can cause the C-frame to spring open slightly. Since this movement will not be consistent for each operation, concentricity and alignment problems can result, leading to compromised accuracy.

An O-type press has the ram rising through the bottom of the O, and the die threaded through the top of the O, with integral dual-opposing arms closing up the 'circle' to provide much greater strength and stability. C-type presses are fine for handgun cartridges, and for bushveld hunters using .308s

A primer-catcher attached to the press is well worth the cost.



or .30-06s. But for the target match shooter or the spring-buck hunter who wants optimum long-range accuracy, or the hunter who reloads massive belted magnum rifle cartridges, an O-type press would be the wiser choice.

When buying a press, be sure it is of a size that will accommodate all the calibres you foresee reloading. The smaller presses may not handle the very lengthy rifle cartridges: certain .416s, the extended .458s and some Weatherby calibres.

IF YOUR BUDGET is limited, Lee equipment is generally priced lower than most, and if treated with care, will last. In this edition of *Magnum*, Roger Ingle reports on the entry-level Lee Delux Reloading Kit which contains everything the beginner needs (other than the dies for his specific calibre) and offers good value for money.

Lee's earlier "turret" (progressive) presses came in for some criticism when it came to loading rifle cartridges. Unlike C-type or O-type presses, which for reasons of strength and stability, accept only one die at a time, a 'turret' or progressive press employs a laterally rotating metal disc into which three or four dies can be threaded adjacently. The disc turns in stages to align each die in turn with the ram below.

BOTTLENECK CARTRIDGES require only two dies to complete the reloading process; straight-walled types require three (an extra is necessary to slightly 'bell' the case mouth to receive cast bullets without shaving off slivers of lead) and some reloaders may even add a fourth special-purpose die. A turret press is convenient and time-saving for the handgunner who loads large quantities of ammo at a time, all year round. He can even leave all the dies permanently in the press (provided he doesn't live in a damp climate like coastal Natal's). The earlier Lee turret presses were fine for handgun cartridges but the system was too flexible for larger

The Rheinmetall Denel Reloading manual is an essential part of the SA reloader's equipment. Ensure that you have the August 2009 reprint.

rifle cartridges. Lee have since improved their progressive press (see Ingle's report).

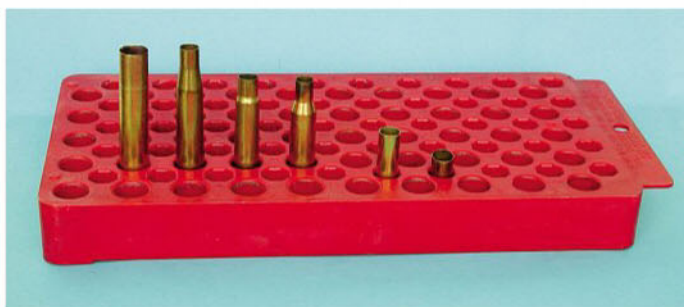
Incidentally, a single-stage press is no real disadvantage, time-wise – you simply put your entire batch of cases through each reloading stage before switching dies for the next stage.

Standard die sets come with a full-length (FL) resizing die, meaning the cartridge case will be resized to factory specs all the way from mouth down to the case head. Full-length resizing ensures easy, trouble-free feeding into the chamber. Novice hand-loaders are advised to full-length resize their cases until they have gained some experience. Note: full-length resizing is *essential* when reloading ammunition to be used on dangerous game. Later we'll discuss partial resizing, and also neck-only resizing, the latter of which requires a special die.

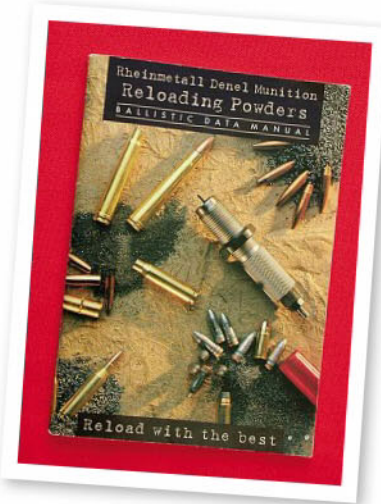
Full-length resizing is essential when reloading ammo to be used on dangerous game

Most, but not all, full-length resizing dies have a built-in (replaceable) de-capping pin, so the resizing and de-capping operations take place simultaneously, and also have an expander plug which precisely resizes the *inside* of the case neck. For some handgun calibres, you can buy a tungsten-carbide sizer-die which obviates the need to lubricate the cases before resizing and clean off the oil afterwards. I found this a huge time-saver when I was shooting Practical Pistol competition. Die sets for handgun cartridges usually come with a bell-mouth die.

Most bullet seating dies facilitate interchangeable seating-plugs in different configurations to match the various



nose shapes of bullets. Some will work for more than one bullet shape, but it is best to match them up, or bullet-alignment problems can result. Check that the die you're buying has a seating-plug appropriate to the bullet you will be loading



– spitzer, round nose, flat-nose, or in the case of handgun cartridges, semi-wad-cutter or whatever. Extra seating-plugs can be bought separately. Remember that switching bullet shapes (e.g. spitzer to round nose) without changing or readjusting seating-plugs will alter your bullet seating depth, which will affect pressure levels.

CHOOSING A PRIMING TOOL requires due consideration. Some reloading presses come with facilities for an optional priming tool which attaches to the press and works in conjunction with the ram. I advise against such priming attachments, as using ram

pressure to seat primers can lead to misfires. Primers are delicate, and must be seated carefully and gently so that the three 'legs' of the anvil only just make contact with the web

Below: Primer flipper. On the left is the grooved base which, when agitated, flips all the primers open-side up. Place the lid over them, invert the tray, lift off the base, and the primers will be blind-side up for picking up by the priming tool tube.

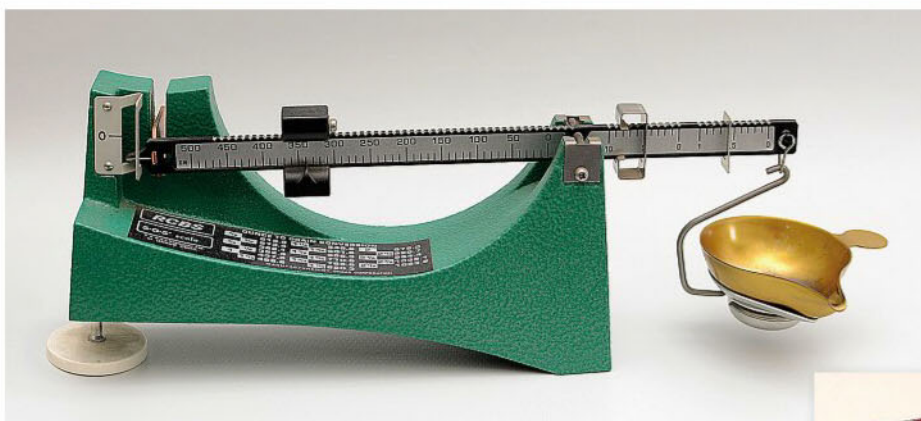


(bottom of the primer pocket). The primer has to be 'felt' in, and the pressure must be halted the instant its legs 'bottom' on the web. The heavy ram of a reloading press, with its powerful lever system, does not afford the sensitivity for this. It is too easy to apply excessive pressure, forcing the anvil against the priming compound, which can crumble it, causing ignition failure. I suggest buying one of the many

Various 'loading blocks' (case holding trays) are available with different-sized cavities to hold all case types.

hand-operated priming tools available. What your press does need, however, is a dedicated primer-catcher (to catch spent primers as they are punched out).

You really need a good, accurate powder scale. A measured powder scoop is okay if you reload for one calibre only, and use the same powder and bullet weight every time. But if you load for two or more calibres, using different powders and bullet weights, you risk making potentially dangerous errors. And if you load close to maximum loads, an accurate powder scale is essential.



An accurate powder scale is essential to the reloader of rifle cartridges for optimum accuracy or near-maximum handgun loads.

Right: A simple, inexpensive mechanical powder-dispenser or 'hopper'.

I prefer the mechanical type – I don't trust electronic scales.

Again, an automatic powder measure or 'hopper' saves a lot of time, and if you shoot handguns competitively, I would regard it as essential.

ALSO ESSENTIAL are shell-holders for your particular calibres, plus case lubricant and a case-lube pad. The *inside* of rifle case necks must also be lightly lubed or the die's expander plug will either get stuck in the neck or will stretch it unduly. Case neck brushes are available but not essential – an earbud will serve as well if not better. If your priming tool employs a tubular primer dispenser, you'll need a primer-flipper (a tray which flips all the primers the right way up for loading). Incidentally, primers must never be handled, as the natural oil from your fingers can deactivate them. Case lube

on your fingers will certainly do so. Use a flipper or tweezers.

Rifle shooters will need a dedicated powder funnel (it has a nozzle designed to fit all case mouths irrespective of calibre, and transfers the powder without spillage) and a powder trickler or dribbler, which can dispense one granule at a time, and is essential for measuring precise charges for optimum consistency. Also essential to reloaders of bottle-neck rifle cartridges is a high-quality stainless steel (*not* plastic) Vernier calliper; also a case trimmer, and de-burring tool for chamfering case mouths. Straight-walled handgun and rifle cases seldom

need trimming, but bottle-neck cases suffer from 'brass flow' when resized, becoming longer-necked, hence must be trimmed back to specification. Trimming leaves the case mouths burred, which interferes with bullet seating, hence deburring is necessary.

OTHER TOOLS, while not essential, are immensely convenient.

One is a 'loading block' or case holder – a plastic tray with various-sized cavities in both sides, holding 50 cases upright in rows. The same tray takes all sizes of case. Without one, hand-loading cartridges in any number is high impossible.

Not everyone agrees on the need to clean out primer residue from primer pockets. As a Practical Pistol competitor I never bothered, nor experienced any resulting misfires. However, for rifle shooters wanting optimum consistency for long-range accuracy, and for hunting, it does make sense, and I have always cleaned out the primer pockets of my rifle



cases. Primer pocket brushes or scrapers are available for this purpose and are inexpensive.

ANOTHER TOOL I have found essential is a bullet-puller (collet type, for use in the press; the inertia type is not always successful, and spills the powder out, which is a pain) and also a stuck case remover (forgetting to lube a case can get it stuck in the sizer die).

Finally, if you load near-maximum loads, you really need a chronograph for measuring velocities. Some gun clubs offer use of one; most serious hand-loaders own one.

Other special-purpose tools will be discussed under advanced techniques. 

**Focus on
Reloading:
Enjoy this
comprehensive
Shotshell Reloading
article by Charles
Duff from 1995.**



Lee Deluxe Reloading Kit



Lee Deluxe turret press.

THE FOLLOWING is stated on the box in which the Lee Deluxe Reloading Kit comes: "This, and a set of dies, contains everything you need to load your own ammunition". This statement is, without question, accurate, as the kit consists of a turret press, a powder scale, an auto disc powder measure, a primer-pocket cleaner, a chamfer tool and a case trimmer. In addition to the comprehensiveness of the kit, the product remains true to the Lee tradition, being of good quality and low cost, and as such it admirably serves as an entry-level introduction to the reloading world.

The centrepiece of the kit is a four-station turret press. This is a

progressive system accomplished by a rotating turret which holds up to four dies having the industry standard of 14 threads per inch and a $\frac{7}{8}$ inch diameter. Fitted with appropriate dies and a shell-holder for the calibre you'll be loading, it provides the following sequential steps without further ado: spent primer removal, case re-sizing, new primer seating – both

up into the die it activates a spring loaded disc which moves forward and empties a volume-measured charge through the die, into the cartridge case. The disc has six cavities for different sized charges and four different discs of differing cavity sizes are provided giving a total of twenty-four cavities to choose from. Some discs can be double-stacked to extend the range. In addition to this, an infinitely adjustable charge bar can be fitted, which covers a range from 0.28 cc to 1.6 cc. This extends the range of charge volumes



Scale.

large and small primers are accommodated – measured powder charge, case-mouth flaring to receive the new bullet, and finally, bullet seating.

THE LEE Auto-Disc Powder Measure is fitted to the top of a mouth-flaring die which is located at the third station. When a cartridge is pushed

to a theoretical 13 000 options. The shooter is reminded that, as with any volume measuring system, frequent checks should be made to ensure the correct weight is being dispensed.

A LEE SAFETY Powder Scale is included in the kit to determine the correct cavity or charge bar setting, and

PRODUCT REPORT

also to check the weight being delivered now and again during the reloading session. The Safety Powder Scale is much improved on earlier models, especially the fine adjustment facility. Using a moveable ball for the balance poise is a novel, and significant, improvement on the more conventional method of sliding a square-shaped poise over a notched beam. The range, up to 100 grains, is adequate for the intended purpose. However, it will be insufficient should the shooter wish to weigh bullets.

ONE OF THE first presses I bought, more years ago than I can recall, was a Lee turret press: an early predecessor of the one supplied in the Deluxe Reloading Kit. It was a three-station model, and I must say, the additional station supplied with this new Lee Deluxe kit is a welcome improvement. Other improvements in this new design are evident, such as a better station index for locking in place the particular die to be used, and a more comfortable operating lever. These and other changes are undoubtedly a consequence of many years of experience in the reloading business.

The press is essentially a closed-frame or "O" type design, the turret ring assembly holding the turret and dies being supported by three columns which bolt the top assembly to the main base. Progressive presses are at their best in the quick production of handgun ammunition, their speed and convenience being the advantage.

THE RAM STROKE in the Lee press is 3 inches, thus accommodating most rifle cartridge lengths. However, the shooter should be aware that although progressive presses allow rapid reloading, most rifle case reloading, especially the larger sizes, will be better accomplished in a single-station O-frame press where the structure is more robust and the desired die and ram alignment tolerances are better served. Large single-station presses can accommodate 3¼ inch cases and in some, the larger 1-inch diameter dies used for exceptionally big cartridge cases.

A small shortcoming of the Lee turret press is that spent primers are caught inside the base casting. The press has to be removed from the work surface to clear them when a large volume has accumulated. It is also disappointing that, unlike the earlier turret press, it cannot be configured for left hand use. But these are trivial issues.

THE PRIMER POCKET cleaner, chamfer tool and case trimmer are independent small tools which are useful in the preparation of cases. The primer pocket cleaner is self explanatory. The chamfer tool is used to de-bur the case-mouth after the trimmer has been used to trim the case length. Trimming is necessary with bottleneck cases as the necks grow fractionally in length after resizing. The Lee Deluxe Reloading Kit comes with excellent, illustrated assembly and operation instructions. It is easy to install and a pleasure to use. 



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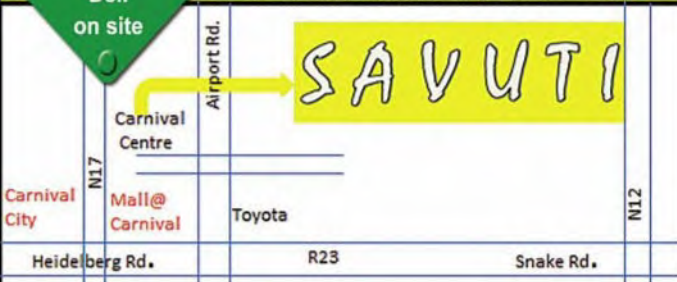
Mossberg vanaf R6 500 | Savages van R8 000 (Scope ingesluit)

Glock 19 Gen3 Olive green - R8 000





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SAVUTI

Bags of History

by **ROBIN BARKES**



Of this collection of old shot bags, all were handmade except the one with the brass spout and detachable measure.

THE HISTORY and development of shotguns has been the subject of many writings. The same applies to the accessories used to load and fire smoothbore muzzle-loaders. The use of shot in firearms goes back to the earliest times. Records dating back to 1346 detailing items stored in the Tower of London include large quantities of lead shot. Bear in mind those were the days of the first hand-held guns which had no triggers or locks. Men set off these guns by means of a glowing coal or the red-hot end of a length of wire. By the time the matchlock gun was in use, craftsmen were making powder flasks. They used

horn, ivory, wood, brass, glass, large seashells and even coconuts. But of the containers used to carry lead shot, it seems to me little was recorded.

It was not until the early 1800s that the shot flask with adjustable dispenser nozzle made its appearance. These bag-shaped flasks were more or less the same size as powder flasks. They had adjustable pouring spouts

that could throw different weights of shot – such as the 1-1/8 ounce load I use in my 12-bore gun. The other common shot dispenser of the 1800s was the shot snake, a long tubular leather container that held a pound or two of shot carried over the shooter's shoulder. The open end of the tube held a removable brass measure into which a charge of pellets was poured and from there down the barrel. But how did the wildfowler and gamebird shooter carry his shot before that?

THIS APPEARS to be an item of firearms history overlooked by collectors and historians and it was something that nagged me. As a lover and user of old firearms, I wanted to know exactly how the hunters of old went about loading their guns. My quest proved to be a long and frustrating one. My



The shot bag I made 40 years ago without realising I was copying history.

search through the sources available to me convinced me that there was no such history! None of my gun books revealed anything on shot holders. Using a magnifying glass, I spent hours studying reproductions of old paintings, engravings and sporting prints, trying to spot something that may reveal how shooters back then carried shot in the field. Powder flasks or horns, and priming flasks were in evidence, but no visible means of conveying shot.

SURELY THE shooters didn't carry the loose shot in the deep pockets of their hunting coats? Then again, maybe they did. A side-pocket, possibly leather-lined, would have afforded quick access. Maybe they simply grabbed a handful of shot and poured it down the barrel. Perhaps they carried a simple scoop-measure in the same pocket, and scooped up a fill of shot, sealing the mouth with the ball of the thumb as they lifted it from the pocket. Some artists of the period specialized in painting still-lives of dead game. They sometimes added a gun and powder flask to their composition, but none whose work I have scrutinized ever included any form of shot container. Why this important item was always ignored by artists, beats me.

FROM A LIBRARY I borrowed the massive book *Game & Hunting* by Kurt G. Bluchel, but its 600 pages revealed nothing on how shot was carried in the field prior to the percussion era. The nagging issue for me was that history records that men were shooting game birds during the matchlock

Sportsmen began to attempt 'shooting flying' and the term 'fowling piece' entered the vocabulary to describe a dedicated 'shot gun'.

Artwork of the time shows English gentlemen employing manservants to load their guns for them. Many old paintings and sporting prints show



Another convenient way to carry shot in the 1800s was to use a shot snake with its removable brass measure.

era. Yes, they shot the birds on the ground or on the water, and spreading shot made it easier. After the matchlock era came the flintlock and wheellock era, introducing faster lock time.



toffs banging away at birds. They seem to be carrying nothing but their guns. Of course, you can't place too much store in the technical accuracy of these paintings – in most instances the toffs posed for the artist in his studio or in the drawing-rooms of their own mansions, and the painter filled in the backgrounds later. These pictures often show the ever-present servants, usually with a heavy bag slung over their shoulders – and sometimes carrying his nibs's second gun. Some of those bags would have been game bags. Others might have contained shooting accoutrements, including some or other form of shot container. It's quite likely that the loader carried the shot ready-measured, wrapped in individual paper cartridges.

Left: It seems that adjustable shot flasks like these first appeared in the early 1800s.

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PAPER CARTRIDGES go back a long time; there are contemporary records of "paper bags for musketeers" during the matchlock era. In military terms this usually referred to rolled paper cartridges that held powder and ball, but it seems logical they would have done the same with shot. Old illustrations of musketeers show the soldiers wearing bandoliers with what appear to be small wooden powder containers hanging from them, each of a size for a single load. It stands to reason that they would do the same with shot. But all this is speculation, for I could not find any record of such.

But hold on, I thought, what did I do when I bought my first caplock shotgun about forty years ago? I was faced with the same problem as those old hunters with their match-, wheel- or flintlocks. The kilogram of number 5 shot bought from a local gun shop came in a plastic bag and I was not going to lug that around. I transferred all the shot into a square cigar box. But, that too, was not the kind of thing to carry around in the field.

SO, AFTER a bit of head-scratching I got hold of one of those Spanish wine bags you buy in novelty shops. After cutting it down to a smaller size I filled it with a morning's supply of shot. This was just the thing to tuck into my shooting bag with my powder-flask and wads. I used this shot bag for years until I bought an original adjustable shot flask from an antique shop.

I figure this is probably what those early shotgunners used before the advent of shot 'snakes' and the adjustable shot flask in the 1800s – simple leather shot bags. And you know what? This simple and easy solution was recently confirmed for me. I had the wonderful opportunity to handle and examine a selection of old and fragile shot bags of American origin. I was blown over in that the old colonist farmers and hunters had done exactly as I did – right down to the carved wooden stopper. This direct connection with shooting history sent a thrill through my body.

I imagine it's hard for some to understand how anyone could get so excited about little leather bags. But some of the bags still contained a pinch or two of shot. As I handled each one, I wondered about its owner who had carefully cut and stitched the bag together, then whittled a wooden stopper before filling it with shot. Who was he? What birds did he shoot, and where?

Five of the bags were homemade, but one had a beautiful brass pouring spout with a cleverly designed cut-off arrangement attached to the bag to release a stream of shot into the detachable measuring cup.

The homemade bags gave no clue as to what the shooter used as a measure for each charge – possibly just his hand; possibly he hung a separate little cup from his neck. In those days they kept things simple and that's the way I like it. I hunt only with muzzle-loaders now. 

Rock Pigeon

(*Columba guinea*)

by **ANDRÉ GROBLER**



Photo by Johan Norval.

ROCK PIGEON shooting is very popular in South Africa, owing to the healthy populations and wide distribution of these birds. Many wing-shooters consider the 'rocky' the most thrilling of the gamebirds – it can perform astonishing turns, dives and climbs. It provides a stiff challenge for any sportsman and in full flight can have even the most experienced sending shot aimlessly into blue skies.

Rock pigeons (Afrikaans: *Kransduif*) are found throughout Southern Africa except in the Kalahari (flat sandy) regions of Botswana and eastern Namibia. In the wild these birds roost and nest on rock ledges in mountains and hills. In urban areas they will roost on ledges of tall buildings, and in agricultural areas, in farm sheds.

THE ROCK PIGEON is pale slate-grey in colour on the head, back, breast and stomach. The neck feathers are a pale purple to pink. The wings are a darker grey with a reddish overlay with white freckles. The tail feathers are grey with a broad, dark grey band; the legs are a red-orange. The eyes have red patches and the bill is dark grey. The males are slightly bigger than the females. In

flight the rock pigeon appears darker than other pigeons.

Rockies fly to crop fields to feed twice a day. They are seed-eaters and they seek out sunflower, sorghum and maize fields. They may fly in groups of about five to eight birds or in flocks of more than twenty.

THEIR FLIGHT is varied and unpredictable; when flying into a strong headwind, they may fly just above the ground. In these conditions shooters must be very alert and careful not to take shots that may endanger other guns or workers. When the birds are coming in thick and fast, it is easy to get over-excited – always remember the "blue sky shots only" rule. Most shooters know to wear shooting glasses, but organizers should ensure that workers and helpers anywhere in the shooting zone should be issued with eye protection.

A ROCK PIGEON shoot needs some advance scouting and planning. Most landowners will know generally where the birds are feeding, but it is wise to visit the field the day before the shoot to ensure nothing has changed, as the

flocks can move to another field from one day to the next. Establish the birds' incoming and outgoing flight paths and post the guns accordingly. In normal weather conditions the early morning flight starts arriving 20 to 40 minutes after sunrise. Be on the look-out for a change in flight paths – changing weather will influence flight patterns.

THESE BIRDS have exceptional eyesight. Wear clothing that will have you blending in with the surroundings. Camo clothing is a good idea and don't forget to mask your face or it will stand out like a reflector.

Decoys, used correctly, will bring a high-flying flock down to join them. Another good tactic is for each shooter to place his felled birds close by in a lifelike position to serve as decoys. In sunflower fields place the dead birds on the sunflower heads.

WHEN A FLOCK comes in, pick a single bird on the side nearest you and concentrate on it alone. Most hunters use No 7 shot as it is freely available, but No 5 or 6 would be a better choice on these tough birds. As always, pick up all downed birds and cartridge cases. 



Taxing Shots

by **CHARLES DUFF**



OVER THE YEARS, in shotgun shooting, certain shots have achieved a reputation for being very much harder to pull off than most. These vary from country to country, generally due to the differing game birds occurring in these countries.

One that is frequently quoted in Britain is the high in-coming and curling pheasant. Since you'd go a long way to find a driven pheasant shoot in southern Africa, this is not one for us to bother much about, but investigating what makes any bird more difficult than another can be educational. The British sportsman is taught always to start behind the bird, accelerate through it along the bottom line of the flight path, then pull ahead and shoot in one smoothly accelerating sweep. This gets

the gun onto the line of the bird, gets it moving faster than the target and, as the muzzles pull ahead you squeeze the trigger. They call it "Bum – Breast – Beak – Bang".

A high pheasant, curling tightly in the wind, does not give you much opportunity to get onto the line of the bird, or to accelerate through it sufficiently, hence the difficulty in achieving enough of an accurate lead in the right direction. Obviously, the higher the bird the greater the lead required. At this point the sage advice of 'try to miss it ahead' is emphatically applicable.

A similarly taxing shot that can pose a real dilemma in trying to judge it is a high incoming duck or goose heading straight toward you against a strong wind. I seem to face such shots regu-

larly every season. The problem is that the bird is apparently hardly moving against the wind, and while we know that bird shot, even the larger sizes, can be much affected by wind, few of us know by how much, relative to the increase in wind speed. For that matter, few of us can give even semi-accurate estimates of wind speed. All I know is that, if the wind rocks you on your feet, give up and go home.

THE PROBLEM is exacerbated by the fact that, to achieve sufficient lead on such an incoming bird, the muzzles must accelerate through the bird, hence the barrels hide it from view. In calm conditions you should shoot instinctively the moment the bird is obscured, but in a wind you must swing further and faster to achieve sufficient lead against the wind. Here the follow-through is all-important. If you stop as you pull the trigger you will miss. Yet you cannot see the bird to estimate the lead. A dilemma indeed! I solve it by waiting for a bird that is slightly off to one side, treating it as a high crossing bird, timing my swing when I establish the lead (you know, "one thousand, two thousand", etc.). Then the next directly oncoming bird gets the same time interval as it disappears from view behind the muzzles. It works for me.

Also considered by the Brits to be an extremely taxing shot is the snipe put up in a marsh. Since we may not legally shoot our snipe in SA, local wingshooters need not agonise about this one. But, as I spend a significant percentage of my wingshooting time wallowing about in glutinous mud and slush,

I can appreciate the problems of being caught wrong footed by the flush, being slow to get onto the bird due to wearing lots of warm clothing, and the difficulty of accelerating the muzzles through the highly erratic flight of the bird. A similar bird is our crested partridge, which is usually flushed in bush, and rarely close, as it is as nervous as the British snipe. It is expert at interposing branches, bushes and trees between it and the shooter, posing a difficult snapshot type of target at the best of times.

ON SOBER reflection, the crested partridge is really closer to the woodcock, a much bigger bird than the snipe, though slightly smaller than the crested, and equally proficient, if not superior, in interposing vegetation between it and the eager sportsman. An added difficulty is that woodcock are more active in twilight and are well camouflaged and easy to lose against a backdrop of dark trees and bushes. The crested is not crepuscular and is early to bed, yet not too many of them get shot as compared to the Swainson's francolin for example. That they tend not to hold to a dog doesn't help either.

A really difficult bird to hit is our greywing partridge, flushed on the edge of a hillside, when he curves over and down the slope – usually with whatever wind there is, just to make things even more difficult. I am sure that this curving and dropping over the edges of mountains is also common with walked-up grouse in northern Britain, but I cannot recollect much of an ado ever being made of such a target over there. In SA, almost everyone who has had the pleasure of shooting greywing will certainly mention it, usually ruefully. To my mind, the problem is compounded by the fact that we shotguns are not attuned to shooting at targets moving well below us. We're accustomed to their flying well above us.

Many years ago, at the AGRED venue known as the 'Guineafowl' in Midrand, clay pigeons were frequently flighted over a waterlogged quarry – from water level – but shot at from a

cliff above, at least 5-8 metres up, if memory serves. Almost everyone had difficulty with this otherwise relatively easy going-away target even though the water clearly showed where your pattern was going – usually behind and over the top.

Many wingshooters have problems with relatively high, but still eminently shootable, guineafowl. Over the years I have seen many, many cartridges expended for a not very good return on such birds. The root of the problem is that most of our hunters do not get many guineafowl shoots per season, hence lack experience. Not long ago, I stood in line next to a Provincial sporting clays shooter and watched him miss six consecutive incoming driven guineas on the trot.

In the air, the guinea looks bigger and slower than it actually is. Side-ways-on, its profile looks impressively bulky, but head-on it is really rather skinny. Plucked of its feathers, it is emphatically not a large bird. Consider the vital triangle of head and upper torso incorporating the lungs and heart, and this is surprisingly small.

THE TENDENCY is to use large shot – No 4s are common. To illustrate: the difference between 4s and 6s is 170 to 270 pellets per ounce of shot; that's

100 pellets per ounce or 58% less. The pattern of 4s at long range, say 35 metres, can easily have holes in it bigger than the vital area of the bird. Add to this the fact that the speed of the bird is so often under-estimated, and you have a recipe for disaster. The remedy, lead more, use smaller shot.

Another bird that is frequently hit but not picked up is a walked-up partridge or francolin – ostensibly a really easy shot. A going-away, rising, straight-flying bird should be a doddle. But all too often there's a cloud of feathers and no bird on the ground. Two things turn it into a wounded escapee. The first is that most of us tend, on such a bird, to lift our heads fractionally off the comb for a better view, thus raising the rear sight (our eyes) which means the shot goes high. Secondly we aim for the middle of the bird. Unless the bird is very close (in which case you really won't enjoy eating it) this means a close miss over the top. I have spent years watching others (from well out to one side) doing precisely this, and seen the quite dramatic effect of the feathers along the bird's back being shredded, and the bird hitting the ground running. I'm sure that many times the bird is not even pricked. They run a good distance and then, if followed by a dog, usually flush and fly away. Yet the remedy is so simple: hold low. If the



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flight is slightly to one side and the head is visible (normally looking back at you) ignore the body and hold low and just to the side of the head. On any gamebird, always ignore the body and shoot for the head if it is visible.

*The trick is to fix on
one bird early, and
stick with it*

NOVICE wingshooters often find it highly taxing when a large covey or flock of birds flushes or passes. You soon learn that the trick is to fix on one bird early, and stick with it, and you'll have no difficulty. However, human nature being what it is, a choice of a multiplicity of targets often has us switching to another that looks easier or closer, then to another and another, until the optimum moment for shooting has passed and we are left with a difficult long range shot at a going away bird. I would think that most bird shooters have been through this; an incoming horde of rock pigeons, a flush of a dozen or more greywing, the departure of a couple of hundred guineafowl and the arrival of a flock of spurwing are all examples that I have faced and I'm certain that I am not alone.

The steadily growing sport of Sporting Clays is now notorious for many technical birds and a frequently presented one is the clay that, whether incoming or crossing, is a 'flopper', so arranged that it can only be shot during its descent. The trick is to judge how much lead to allow, and this must be along a considerable extension of the bird's downward flight path. The only similar live bird would be one coming in to land in front of you; this could be a duck settling among your decoys for example. I hate such a shot and would never take it on a live bird, as any non-blue sky target is an emphatic no-no in my book. In the field, you could conceivably destroy some expensive decoys, or someone's prized retriever, or

even pepper a fellow hunter on the other side of the water. Besides, it is hardly sporting to shoot a bird as it alights on the water. In such a case I would stand up and give the bird time to start climbing before shooting. That such targets occur disturbingly often on the clay range is, to me, disquieting in that it promotes potentially unsafe shooting. I do wish that range setters would go back to the roots of Sporting Clays and give us sporting birds.

Many competitors, mainly novices, have a problem with clay 'rabbits'. Just as an aside, I'd like to know, now that the term 'clay pigeon' is no longer politically correct (it's now a clay target) what we are expected to call the clay rabbit. This term just has to be even *more* politically incorrect. I'm afraid I will never be PC. Anyhow, I have noticed that, should the rabbit bounce, many shooters wait for it to come back to earth, thus losing valuable time and even allowing it to go past the optimal shooting zone. If you rattle a bit with physics, it becomes plain that if a rabbit is trundling along at x speed, when it bounces its momentum is now shared by two axes, the horizontal and the vertical. Thus the horizontal speed must become $\frac{1}{2}x$. Experienced shooters nail it in mid-air, when it is a slower target. If you concentrate on a bouncing clay rabbit, as it takes off, the forward speed slows dramatically; on contacting terra firma again, the rabbit actually accelerates. Crossing rabbits are one thing, but for a really taxing and exasperating shot, a directly going-away or incoming rabbit is hard to beat.

Then there are the taxing shots that should never be attempted. The classic is the rock pigeon in its escape dive, followed closely by similar dives by red-eye and turtle doves. Pigeon and dove shoots usually involve several guns, so resist, with every fibre of your being, the impulse to follow the bird's twisting dive and pull the trigger. Rather save a cartridge, and maybe someone's life, and merely watch with appropriate awe as it goes past. Take it from me, unless you are a Grand Prix driver, your reflexes are way too slow to ever – safely – hit such a bird. 

Meet 'n Loop of Kamer Maklik

deur JOHAN PRINSLOO



Bo: Tregter in posisie wanneer gietstuk van patroonkamer gemaak word. **Regs:** Swael word in trompgedeelte van loop gegiet.



TECH TALK deur Gregor Woods (Mei 2015) oor hoe 'n presiese deursnit van 'n vuurwapen se loop gemaak kan word, deur van 'n lood-gietstuk gebruik te maak, het my laat dink aan 'n ander ou beproefde en maklike manier om die loop se deursnit of die grootte van 'n kamer te meet.

Al wat nodig is, is 'n swael, ook genoem blomswael. Dit is nog redelik maklik verkrygbaar by jou plaaslike koöperasie of apteek. Verder gebruik ek 'n blikkie – ek gebruik die vlak tipe waarin fyn tuna verpak word – waar-

van die rand omgebuig is sodat 'n tuitjie en vashouplek vir 'n tang gevorm is. 'n Klein gasbrander om die swael te smelt, 'n gasmasker, veiligheidsbril, leerhandskoene 'n leervoorskoot, toerygskoene, 'n skoonmaakstok vir die loop, 2x4 lappies en 'n bankskroef met sagte kake om die geweer in vas te klem, is ook nodig.

HAAL DIE GEWEER se slot uit en verwyder die magasyn. Druk dan 'n lappie met 'n bietjie olie deur die loop. Maak 'n

proppie van die helfte van die olielappie en druk dit met die skoonmaakstok van vooraf in die loop in totdat sowat 50mm van die tromp is. Klem die geweer regop vas in 'n bankskroef, met die loop na bo. Draai die teleskoop en die kolf toe met 'n ou handdoek om dit te beskerm teen warm swael wat moontlik daarop kan val tydens die gietproses.

HOU DIE BLIKKIE met 'n tang vas en gooi een tot twee eetlepels swaelpoeier in die blik en verhit stadig oor die gasvlam. Smelt die swael in 'n goed geventileerde vertrek en gebruik 'n gesigmasker en bril om die oë en neus teen die swaweldampe te beskerm. Gebruik die leerhandskoene, 'n leervoorskoot en toeryg stewels om jouself teen gesmelte swael te beskerm.

Gebruik die tang om die blikkie se tuit by die loop se bek te bring en skink die holte vol swael totdat dit sigbaar is by die kroon van die loop. 'n Blik tregtertjie kan ook gebruik word om die swael in te gooi.

DIE TREGTERTJIE werk geriefliker en makliker indien daar vanaf die grendel kant van die geweer 'n kamergietstuk gemaak word. Om 'n kamergietstuk te maak druk weereens 'n lappie in tot so 20mm dieper as die kamer in die loop af.

Links: Digitale Vernier en Mikrometers vir akkurate meting van gietstukke. **Regs:** Veranderde tunablikkie en tang vir die verhitting en giet van swael.





Links: Swael gietstuk van .308 Win nog aan stukkies 2x4, van trompgedeelte met 'n 150gr Hornady SPBT vir skaal.
Middel: Blik tregter vir gebruik tydens skinkproses van gesmelte swael. **Regs:** Bottel met blomswael.

Die swael stol onmiddellik nadat dit gegiet is en kan maklik met die skoonmaakstok van die lapprop se kant af uitgedruk word. Die gietstuk van swael is 'n presiese weergawe van die boor van die loop of die profiel van die kamer en nek.

DIÉ METODE van 'n gietstukke maak om kamers en lope mee te meet is so oud as die geskiedenis van gewere self.

Soos met enige verhitte bestanddeel moet groot versigtigheid aan die dag gelê word om nie jouself of iemand anders te beseer tydens die hantering daarvan nie. Die gesmelte swael moet dadelik na die gietproses na 'n veilige plek buite die gebou geneem word en gesmoor word met 'n deksel indien weer gebruik gaan word. Smoor met sand indien dit weggegooi gaan word.

Maak seker die blikkie is skoon en afgekoel voordat jy dit wegsit.

Daar is nie 'n makliker en akkurer manier vir 'n gietstuk om jou geweer se tromp of kamer te meet nie. Dit is so algemeen in die werkwinkel soos rooklampe wat die kolmaker gebruik om inlaatwerk mee te doen. **[M]**



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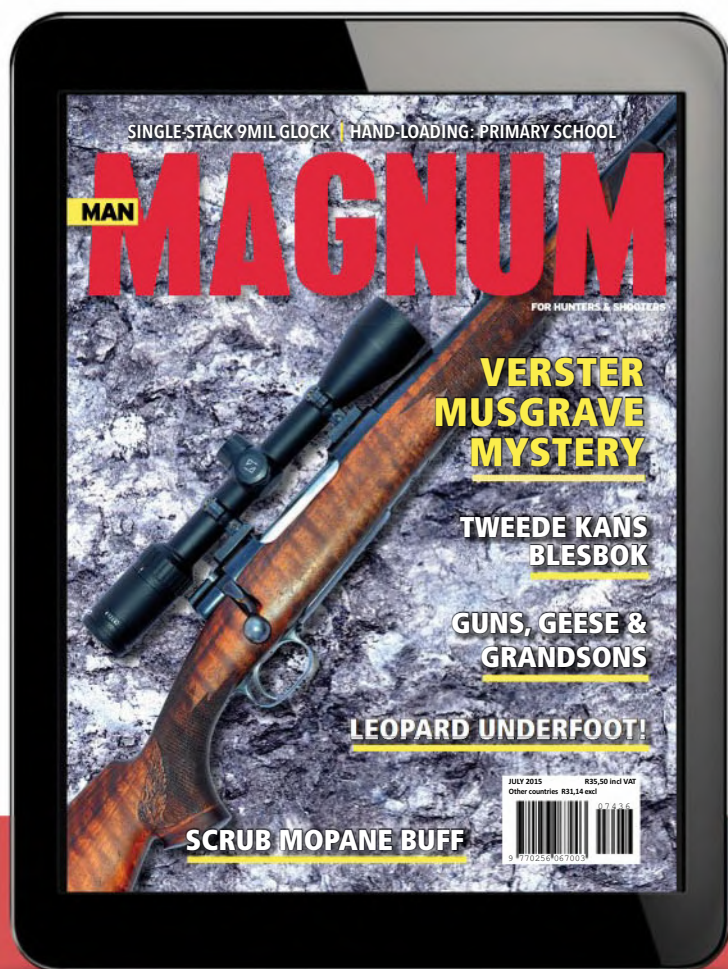
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Vixen Binos

The Vixen Foresta, in this case an 8x42 model. The Foresta is an affordable, yet very good, entry level binocular.



WHEN IT COMES to buying optics, the rule of thumb is to buy the best you can afford, as this is one field in which you generally get what you pay for. However, I was recently pleasantly surprised to find bins that were not only good quality, but at a price that most hunters should be able to afford.

I encountered Vixen binoculars for the first time at HuntEx this year. The Vixen Foresta 10x42 WP immediately drew my attention. On sale for R3 295, I took it to be a budget-quality optic, but looking through these glasses in the somewhat dark exhibition hall surprised me. The image was clear and sharp.

According to the accompanying literature, it is a roof-prism binocular that features reflection enhanced coating on the prism surface. This affords high resolution, bright and crisp images even in low light. The open hinge design is lightweight and makes it easy to hold and focus the binoculars with one hand. It also has attached lens covers for protection

On the Vixen bins the diopter adjustment is on the centre focus dial and not on an eyepiece.

against dust and dirt. Multi-coating is applied to the entire lens surface. All Foresta binoculars are waterproof and are covered by a lifetime warranty.

THEY ALSO SENT me the bigger Vixen Artes 10.5x45 binoculars for testing, which feature high contrast ED glass

The Vixen Artes 10.5x45, a solid piece of glass.



and retail for R12 995. The lenses are multi-coated to allow higher light transmission and deliver very clear and bright images. These Japanese-made binoculars are nitrogen filled and waterproof.

I USED BOTH bins on a hunt in the Northern Cape and I must rate both as 'best buys' in their respective price ranges, especially so the Vixen Foresta which, as a general-purpose glass, delivers superb quality with clear bright images. This makes it excellent value for hunting and birding. It remained

comfortable during long periods of viewing and I experienced no eye strain. Given the price, it outperforms much more expensive models.

The bigger Artes model does everything better than its smaller brother. Definition and clarity

are excellent. The price is considerably higher, but so are the specs.

I also gave the Foresta to a young professional hunter to use, who had just started out in his career. Most youngsters in his position find their biggest challenge to be judging trophy quality and sexing game animals. He wrote me a letter, and I quote: "Since I got the binocular I nominated an eland, six springbuck, a black wildebeest and an oryx to be hunted. The binocular is very bright and clear and a great help in my job. Since I got it I have not made a mistake with sexing any animal." That about says it all.

Contact your nearest dealer or the distributor Mphoto in Cape Town on 021-465-6355 or nick@mphoto.co.za. They also stock the Vixen Artes 8.5x45 for R11 995. 

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■ USMC M16/ARIS cleaning kit, R250; Walther P38/P1 magazine, R350; P38/P1 holster (leather), R250; Gun cleaning kit, R250. 083-624-5530 (011).

■ Mauser Broomhandle 7.63x25, R15,600; CZ75 9mmP pistol, R4600; Brno .22L rifle, R4800; Winchester 12ga single-barrel shotgun, R500. Tommie 084-443-3324 (012).

■ Astra 9mm Broomhandle Model F, R9000; FN Browning 9mm, R3000; Both excellent condition, rarely used, plus ammo. De Boer 083-306-2714 (012).

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■ Meat-O-Matic band saw, with mincer and sausage filler, excellent condition, R3500. Willem 082-887-1975 (044).

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■ .38 Special, 400x once-fired cases, 140x Frontier 125gr CMJ, Lee dies, ankle holsters, HK536 speed loader, R1200 onco. 073-196-0572 (011).

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We at **Magnum** have always tried to keep the price of the magazine as low as possible to ensure that our readers could afford their favourite magazine during these troubled economic times.

Last year we had to hike our subscription prices for foreign subscribers because **Magnum** was essentially footing the bill for the postage. We regret that we are now obligated to adjust our prices for local subscribers as well. In the past subscribers received 12 issues for the price of 10, without paying for postage.

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Loading Cartridges

by **MALCOLM COBB**

BLACK POWDER is produced in several granulations for shooting purposes, Fg, FFg, FFFg and FFFFg, coarsest to finest. In reality, in South Africa we get FFg and FFFg, with the FFg (Double "F") being good for sporting rifles and muskets and FFFg (Triple "F") being best for shotguns, lighter ball firing rifles and most pistols. However supplies are limited and we have to make use of whatever is available (including industrial and ex-military quality powders) no matter what they were originally intended for. For that reason, the following is probably of more use (ex *Hatcher's Notebook* quoting du Pont):

Grade	Must pass sieve	Must be retained on (meshes per inch)
Fg	14	16
FFg	16	24
FFFg	24	46
FFFFg	46	60

Sportsmen who are interested in evaluating their powders are advised to get down to Mr Price Home and buy some tea strainers. I have two, one at about 14 meshes per inch and one at 26, which work for me.

On a recent test using the 26 mesh: **Modern Wano FFg powder:** NOTHING except a very few fines went through, which is correct.

Elephant FFFg: About 30% passed through, which makes it closer to FFg as 70% (larger grains) was retained.

Curtis & Harvey FFFg: ALL OF IT went through, which is correct (and Curtis & Harvey was about as good as it gets)

Old SA produced G-20: HALF went through, HALF was retained: pretty much what we always said about G-20.



A common tea strainer at 26 meshes per inch will reliably sift out FFg from FFFg but note the amount of fines still left in the residue.

As a guide to how black powder rifles work, you should know that in the final days of the muzzle-loading target rifle (around 1880) great results were obtained with .451" rifles firing slightly hardened lead bullets weighing 480 to 520 grains on top of charges of around 80 to 120 grains of powder.

ONE REASON they were so accurate was that a bore diameter bullet was carefully loaded from the muzzle (which gave precise alignment in the bore) and firmly tamped down onto a wad over the powder, leaving no air space. On firing, the bore-diameter bullet 'bumped up' to groove diameter, took the rifling and generally hit what it was aimed at, up to 1 000 yards away. My point here is that:

(a) In muzzle-loaders, the 'smack' of

the black powder going off was needed to bump up (or 'upset') the bullet into the rifling. This feature is also useful in getting undersized bullets to work in breech-loaders.

(b) Even soft (or only slightly hardened) lead bullets can take the strain of being fired at velocities up to the 1200 to 1400fps mark attained in black powder shooting. By slightly hardened, I mean about ½ to 1% tin and nowhere near linotype or wheel-weight mixtures.

A discussion on loading black powder cartridges would fill a book and still be confusing to the novice as there are so many possibilities, many of which work, but only under certain circumstances. This permits me to say that what follows represents my own opinion but should serve as a starting point for experimentation.

(L-r): (1) Original .577 Snider, all brass foil, paper wrapping, nose plugs and base plugs. Do not try to reproduce. (2) An original foil .577/.450, 0.480" diameter neck holding a taper paper patch bullet at 0.458" diameter over patch. (3) Another original case blown out to 0.505" on firing because the chamber is designed to accommodate the folds in the coil case. (4) A Kynoch commercial .577/.450 (orange patch) with the neck already at 0.505" which means that the bullet has to be 0.475" diameter to fill the case and align properly. (5) A Westley Richards .500/.450 No 2 Musket, thin wall drawn case by Bertram holding a paper patch bullet sized to 0.563" and seated right out to 'bump up' and align properly in the bore. (6) A turned brass .577/.450, thicker case walls so a 0.457" diameter bullet fits snugly and aligns properly without crimping. This particular bullet is a 457121 design which takes plenty of lube and has proved accurate.



The cartridges on which these notes are based are the .500/.450 No 2 Musket (which is great to work with), the .577/.450 Martini Henry and the .577 Snider (which aren't).

Lesson No 1 is that the greater part of the original (1880s) published information on these three cartridges doesn't work for the modern reloader, as these cartridges were designed following muzzle-loading practice and were never intended to be reloaded, so the reloader is advised to get a micrometer or a Vernier and start to log the actual dimensions that apply to the components that he has available to work with.

As an example, the fully dimensioned Kynoch catalogue of 1884 gives the neck diameter of the No 2 Musket as 0.484" which may be true of factory ammunition but most cartridge cases will blow out to 0.490" diameter on firing, because most chambers are

that size. My No 2 Musket resizing dies squeeze cases back to 0.480" which quickly leads to split necks – a very unhappy situation. The alternative is

to avoid crimping and either select or swage a bullet that will be a tight fit in the fired case and still go down the bore without deforming.

Below (l-r): (1) A typical 0.577" muzzle-loader bullet which rarely works well in a Snider. (2) The same bullet design swaged up to 0.585" which aligns better in a case. (3) Australian CBE at 0.590" which is groove diameter but needs careful alignment because of the short bearing length. (4) Experimental 0.580" hollow base with extra length to improve ballistics – it worked, but at 670 grains it gave crippling recoil. (5) Swaged 0.580" for patching. A successful bullet with a long bearing length for alignment and hollow base to reduce weight.



Right: .45 calibre bullets (l-r): (1) An original Henry taper bullet 0.450" at the base end to 0.439" at the nose, which patches to 0.458" diameter. (2) A modern 0.445" bullet by Mike Neuman for patching. (3) A 500 grain Lyman 457125 which casts up at 0.458" with a 0.449" bore riding nose which 'bumps up' successfully. (4) An Australian Cast Bullet Engineering 480 grain 0.468" MH with a 0.456" bore riding nose. (5) A Lyman 457121 style fully cannellured which works well in turned cases if seated far out.



Note also that the Martini Henry .577/.450 cases are of two kinds: rolled foil at 0.480" neck unfired (as per Temple *The Boxer Cartridge*) whereas the Kynoch 1884 catalogue gives it as 0.505", which is more applicable to the solid drawn cases that were the norm in Kynoch production into the 20th Century. Again: be careful what diameter your neck sizing dies give you as most of the Martinis that I have tried, eject fired cases with 0.508" to 0.510" fired necks. This is the dimension that you have to work with, not the theoretical factory cartridge dimension. The accompanying table shows some working dimensions:

Case Type	Typical Unfired Neck	Source	Typical Fired Neck External	Notes
Martini coil case	0.480"	Temple and Kynoch 1884	0.505"	Cases unwrap to full size and spring back
Martini drawn case	0.502"	Measurement of contemporary Kynoch cases	0.508" to 0.510"	Necks split if resized to 0.480" then reloaded
.500/.450 No 2 Musket	0.482"	Kynoch 1884 and modern Bertram production	0.485" to 0.490"	Don't resize but anneal and light crimp
.577 Snider coil case	0.620"	Temple and measurement	Not fired	Too precious to fire
.577 Snider turned	Not applicable	Measurement	0.636"	Don't crimp. Select bullet to fit tightly

Temple gives the unfired Snider wrapped foil case a neck diameter of 0.620" which is correct. Howell (*Custom Cartridges*) gives 0.6031" quoting "CIP maximum" for the solid case and 0.630" for the coiled. My fired cases are actually 0.635" – 0.638" in the case mouth, consistent over the three rifles I have access to. These are the dimensions to work with.

However, we in South Africa have limited access to drawn cases and often end up using turned cases. The considerations here are:

- (a) turned cases have thicker necks than drawn cases, for the same outside diameter, giving a smaller inside diameter.
- (b) the powder capacity of thicker turned cases is far less than drawn cases giving lower velocities.
- (c) turned cases are brittle and do not neck size well (to give good alignment).

This means there are in fact two systems of reloading required to cope with the different styles of case, using significantly different bullet diameters and charges.

AS AN EXTREME example I once had to test some .577/.450 thick-walled, turned cases which were 0.500" diameter outside (fine) but only 0.452" inside, which is way under the 0.463" groove diameter of a Martini. I therefore used my 0.451" muzzle-loader bullets seated way out into the bore to get the best alignment and they 'bumped up' and worked just fine.

The Martini also works fine with

your bullets are less than 0.463" diameter, a longer and heavier bullet in softish lead will still 'bump up' and fill the diameter gap. The standard weight is 480 grains so don't go too much under that. A hard undersized bullet will just rattle down the bore.

The Snider is more restricted as it works best with 0.585" – 0.590" bullets and most of us can only get relatively short 0.577" muzzle-loader moulds. The resulting bullets barely 'bump up' consistently because they are so short. If you can't get thick-walled cases to even out the sloppy fit, try a bullet swage (more about swages on another occasion). And forget about the original Snider Boxer nose and base plugs as well. Use groove-diameter bullets, flat base with tight fit in the case. They work.

IN ADDITION, the shooter must include a great deal of lubricant to moisten the fouling deposited in the bore. The lube in the cannelures of the average bullet is usually insufficient, so one solution is to include waxed wads behind the bullet (or even a 'cookie' of soft lube) and expect that the lube blows past the bullet on firing and greases the bore. I have used SPG and other commercial lubes for this and it works for me. You can also try natural beeswax and add anything that contains lanolin or moisturisers (like mutton fats) or even Vaseline.

Alternatively, you can overly lube the bullet immediately prior to firing to achieve the same effect. The Americans use a hand cream called "Udderly Smooth" for this. I couldn't find any so I tried Eulactol Heel Balm instead and it worked fine. Pond's foundation is also said to be good.

Load	Cases	Bullet Diam	Bullet Weight	Powder Type	Powder Weight	Average Velocity
.577/.450	Drawn	0.468"	490gr CBE	Wano FFg	90gr	1 284.0fps
.577/.450	Turned ex solid	All turned case results similar to No 2 below				
.500/.450 No 2	Turned	0.457"	540gr patched	Wano FFg	70gr	744.5fps
.500/.450 No 2	Bertram drawn	0.463"	540gr patched	Wano FFg	90gr	1 202.0fps
.500/.450 No 2	Bertram drawn	0.463"	480gr CBE MH	Wano FFg	90gr	1 203.6fps
Snider .577"	Turned	0.575"	565gr shallow base	Elephant FFFg	70gr	1 040.1fps
Snider .577"	Turned	0.575"	480gr Old Style Minie	FFFg Elephant	80gr	1 266.2fps
Snider .577"	Turned	0.585"	Swaged Minie	Wano FFg	75gr	1 002.0fps
Snider .577"	Turned	0.585"	Swaged Minie	Sanadex	65gr	1 047.0fps

To achieve precision shooting, another alternative is to clean the bore after every shot using proprietary black powder cleaner, or some variation on soluble oils or even plain water or spit. Don't forget a patch to dry the bore before firing again.

The topic is actually endless and there are umpteen good, modern reference works on it, all saying some-

thing different. To get to solid ground, the accompanying table shows some shooting results as a guideline and a basis for further experiment (what the average shooter in Southern Africa does from now on is entirely determined by what is available and not by what is best). Assume standard rifle primers, card over-powder wads and a clean-out between shots.

Snider turned cases were selected for wall thickness to give best bullet alignment.

These notes will give the prospective shooter an idea of what to expect but barely constitute a third of what he (or she) needs to know to really shoot well. However, if they get your groups down to about 3" at 100 yards (with few fliers) then you've made a start. 

LETTERS

 **continued from page 11**

Although as a teenager I'd had some recreational hunting experience, I had lots to learn from a professional point of view. I am sure that my short time with Brian paved the way for my being appointed as a Learner Ranger in the Natal Parks Board in 1968.

I enjoyed reading his articles in *Magnum*. Thank you for a great magazine. I was sad to learn of his health struggles in the latter part of his life. I salute a great man and I consider myself privileged to have known him and worked with him. – **D Densham, KwaZulu-Natal**

Disappearing Game Birds

In reply to Mr Anderson's letter in the December 2014 edition: Have you read *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, published in September, 1962? It deals with the effects of synthetic poisons upon nature in the USA – more or less what you're saying about the situation where you live.

Lamenting the disappearance of wild things to hunt, falls upon deaf (political) ears. If you want to complain, form a committee against the irresponsible use of poison nationwide and begin lobbying Parliament. You have to get in their face, or you won't be heard!

Take an in-depth look at the prolific use of banned poisonous substances in Sub-Saharan Africa, it may surprise you. It has been the 'dumping' ground for prohibited chemical

substances, including toxic waste from the West. Why? Because it's cheap; and we are reaping fields of grain to feed the nation. Grain feeds (poor) people while shooting/hunting does not.

You live in the Western Cape and presumably, so do your children. If you want your grandchildren to see indigenous wildlife on your property the way you once did, you have to get involved. – **C Donnelly, Botswana**

Leopards: Rifles vs Shotguns

I am again bringing up the debate about the use of double shotguns versus the use of double rifles, owing to the recent article by Robin Hurt about his son Derek's mauling by a wounded leopard. Robin contacted me with the information shortly after it happened, for which I thank him.

I firmly believe, through my experiences, that a good side-by-side double 12ga shotgun loaded with either AAA or SSG is the better weapon for wounded leopard. A well-balanced shotgun is faster to point and shoot and there is a certain amount of spread, even at a few metres, making the difference, particularly if your shot is a couple of centimetres out, which is critical for head shots. I would go so far as to say that a 3 inch magnum would be even better than the regular 70mm load – more pellets and hotter loads. Unfortunately, I never owned one, so have never put it to the test.

I believe it was a mistake to search for the animal by standing on the back of a vehicle, thus creating an unstable standing position and creating noise to drown out any sounds from the leopard. I always remained on the ground so that I could be more manoeuvrable and could hear better. I say this with no disrespect for Robin or Derek. I am sure Robin has hunted just as many or probably more leopard than I have, and has formed his own opinions through experience.

The use of a couple of dogs to follow up wounded leopard and lion, or even buffalo, is an excellent way of locating the potential attacker before you're too close. The hunter can be made aware of the position of the animal by the yapping dogs and can be pointing the firearm before the beast is on top of him. A couple of trained fox-terriers are ideal. I have used them many times when called out by farmers to take care of big cats wounded by hunting clients. Of course, in many hunting areas, dogs cannot be used because of tsetse fly and other problems. But, if you can use dogs, it certainly helps prevent accidents. – **John Coleman, Eastern Cape**

Rifles vs Shotguns 2

John Coleman kindly paid me the courtesy of sending me his letter to the editor of *Magnum* regarding shotguns vs rifles on wounded leopard. 

LETTERS

I have the greatest respect for John's opinion, based on his many years of experience as a PH, but I do have some comments in reply to his well-meaning letter. First of all – and again, with all due consideration to John – he wasn't there. This makes it difficult for him to comment or judge this particular situation which involved habitat he was not familiar with.

Each situation with a wounded animal is different, necessitating a specific course of action to meet the problem. In this case, having already tracked the wounded cat for a long distance on foot, both the PHs and the Tanzanian Government Game Scouts discussed the situation (long grass) and agreed on the right course of action at that time. Furthermore, the car was at a standstill with the engine switched off when the leopard charged. The vehicle was merely a means of gaining some elevation to help them see into the long grass. Knowing the area intimately, I would have pursued the same course of action.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, and taking John's comments into consideration, most PHs in East Africa prefer large calibre rifles to shotguns. I was personally badly mauled by a leopard while using a 12-bore double barrelled shotgun loaded with buckshot. I shot the leopard off the end of the barrel. The shot never opened up as it was at point blank range; it punched a large hole where the neck and shoulder meet. It was not immediately effective. It took the leopard about half a minute to die, during which time he bit me in over 30 different places. If I had been using either my .470 or .500 double, loaded with soft nose bullets, the leopard would have been killed instantly.

I have been hunting professionally, full time, since 1963. I don't need to fully expound on how many wounded leopard I have hunted during my career. Suffice to say a lot – on average, probably at least one a year throughout my career. Gained from my experience, I personally will only use a heavy calibre rifle on wounded leopard, and never again a shotgun, no matter what cartridges are used. Nothing will make me change that opinion. I had had no problem stopping charging wounded leopard until I made the mistake (in my humble opinion) on that occasion, by using a shotgun.

JOHN MENTIONS DOGS. Yes, a good idea. But in East Africa hunting with dogs on any game animal is prohibited. The exception is gamebirds and problem animals. Also, as John mentioned, tsetse fly. Most hunting areas in Tanzania are populated with these flies, which are lethal to dogs. So, in East Africa the use of dogs on wounded leopard is a non-starter.

We can go on endlessly with this subject. It all boils down to personal choice, what one feels comfortable with and has confidence in. John prefers shotguns, I prefer rifles. Both choices based on long personal experience. Let's leave it at that.

GALLERY

OPM Ammunition Services



OVER THE YEARS, I have often mentioned the excellent services of Otto Planyavski of OPM Ammunition, maker of cartridge cases and custom-loader of ammunition. Otto decided to return permanently to the land of his birth – Austria. Coming close on the heels of the death of Ken Stewart, SA's only other custom cartridge case maker, this was bad news for owners of firearms in obsolete or obscure calibres, and things were looking decidedly bleak.

The good news is that Otto decided that SA, despite all its problems, is still a better country to live in than Austria or Germany. He has returned, and is back in business as before. Otto has a licence to manufacture ammunition, and he can make practically any case or cartridge you could want. He also custom-loads ammunition, so if you have any special needs, or cannot get your rifle to shoot accurately with factory ammo, or if you want to get the very best accuracy out of your rifle, you can send it to him and he will find its barrel's "sweet spot" and tailor-make ammunition specifically for your particular rifle. He also offers personalized head-stamps – see photo. Contact Otto on 083-438-8677.

Gregor Woods

By the way, this season alone Derek had to follow three wounded leopard. The first two were dispatched without problems with his .470 double. If you're in the safari game long enough, the chances of something going wrong and a mauling or worse, are there. We don't go looking for it, but the risk is there. It can happen to any PH. The obligation to seek out a wounded animal is paramount in the safari business. We all accept that willingly, understanding the danger that goes with it.

– **Robin Hurt, Namibia** 



Gun Dog Trials

THE TRANSVAAL Hunt, Point and Retrieve Field Trial club celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.

To celebrate, the club invites all gundog owners to join it in participating in a competition which will coincide with the club's Field Trial Championship Stake. The competition will take place from 28 July to 1 August 2015 on the Springbok-flats. The dogs' hunting skills will be tested under bushveld conditions. The contests start on the Tuesday with the Derby, Maiden and Open Stakes to give all participants a chance to qualify for the Championship Stakes. On the Thursday a non-eliminating Hunting Stake will be held where dog owners can demonstrate their dog's hunting skills even if the dog lacks a bit of discipline.

Those who qualify will compete in the Championship Stake on the Friday. All participants will receive a copy of the club's commemorative book. Gundog owners interested in the event can email Gerhard Ebersohn at g.ebersohn@gmail.com for more information. Details are also available on the club's website at www.german-shorthaired-pointer.co.za. **André Grobler**

Enlarging Bullet Moulds

IN HIS ARTICLE "Pages from the Past" (May 2015 edition) Robin Barkes wrote of solving his .577 Snider's accuracy problem by using slightly "fatter" bullets which Barry Berkovich had cast from a mould he had "lapped out". Undersize bullet moulds can also be a problem when casting for modern (nitro) cartridges. It is not uncommon for rifles or handguns to have slightly oversized bores, rendering bullets cast from the standard moulds for your calibre just too small in diameter to provide adequate accuracy. If your barrel needs bullets of slightly larger diameter than those thrown by your mould (or the biggest mould locally available) here is how to 'lap' out the mould to a larger size.

Cast a bullet from the mould you have, and then drill a hole several millimetres deep, into the dead centre of the bullet's base, ensuring that the axis of the hole is precisely aligned with axis of the bullet. Find a long-shanked screw with a thread slightly larger in diameter than that of the hole, and screw it firmly into the hole. Then use a hacksaw to cut off the screw head. The bullet now has a long shaft protruding from its base, which can be chucked into a hand-drill.

Use a hacksaw to cut three or four shallow grooves into the bullet's bearing surface, running *lengthways* down the shank's parallel sides – like narrow rifling grooves on a fired bullet, only straight. Try to space them fairly evenly around the bullet's circumference. Now smear a thin coating of valve grinding paste (available from motor spares dealers) over the bullet's bearing surface, ensuring that it fills the grooves you have cut.

Replace the coated bullet into the cavity of the mould, ensuring that no traces of grinding paste get onto the flat inner faces of the mould blocks which would prevent them from closing absolutely flush – this is very important. Close

Easy Loading

REFERRING TO the article in the June 2015 *Magnum* on loading and skinning trophies I would like to make a contribution.

I learned the following method from the late Werner de Fries, master hunting guide in the Otavi district, in northern Namibia.

Take a pulley and fit it to tralies at the side where the tralies and cab meet. Reinforce this area. Mine is welded and fixed permanently.

Take a strong rope and put it over the pulley. The animal to be loaded should be as close to the vehicle as possible. Now fit one end of the rope to the legs of the animal, the second end to a nearby tree or bush that is strong enough to carry the weight. The rope must be pulled as tight as possible from the start.

It is best to lower the vehicle's tailgate to be used as a ramp. Now you just drive forward and within a few metres the animal will be on the back.



If, for example, you have to load a big kudu bull and your hunting vehicle is a double cab, don't fix your rope end to the legs but around the stomach of the animal, which will make loading a big animal much easier.

Peter Kienitz

the mould, clamping the two mould blocks together gently but firmly in a vice. The screw-shank will protrude from the mouth of the mould cavity (obviously, the mould's sprue-cutter plays no role in this exercise). Clamp the screw-shank in the chuck of a hand-drill (not an electric drill). Gently twirl the shank so that the bullet rotates within the mould, grinding out the surfaces of the cavity to enlarge it. As the cavity enlarges, the grooves you cut in the bullet will supply more grinding paste. Be careful not to apply lateral pressure to the drill as this will result in an oval-shaped bullet.

Eventually, the cavity will be enlarged to where the bullet is no longer doing its job. Remove the bullet, thoroughly clean out the mould blocks, and cast a new bullet. Make the new bullet – it may now have the diameter you require. If not, repeat the entire process using the new bullet. Keep going until you achieve the diameter you want. – **Gregor Woods**

When to Start Collecting?

WHILE SEARCHING FOR the name of a shooter I met at a match long ago, I came across a Historical Firearms Society of SA newsletter dated March 1980. In it was an article titled '*Pity the Younger Generation*', in which the author (possibly Barry Berkovitch) said he'd found a 25-year-old file in which Martini Henry rifles were going for R3 each, carbines for R4 each, and Martini Sporters for R3, while Westley Richards Monkey Tails were selling for a staggering R8 to R10. Model 71 Mausers (11mm calibre) were a bargain at R1 a piece, and R20 was considered to be overpaying for a flintlock Brown Bess. 'Broom-handle' Mauser pistols and Lugers were going for R30-R50. '*Pity the young collector of today*' said that author in 1980, because on the following page, Sotheby's auction was realising R120-R350 for Monkey Tails, Martini Henrys (six sold) from R90-R200 and Sniders between R150 and R320. No Lugers were mentioned, but R8 000 was paid for a Holland & Holland Royal in .500/.450.

Viewed from the 2015 perspective, I can only say my last Martini Henry cost me R4 000 (though it was a good one, with a proven shooting record) and I saw one on sale recently for rather more than that. At a recent auction, Webley revolvers were fetching R2 000-R3 000, Broom-handles R10 000 to R30 000 and Lugers somewhere in between. Basically, that is a factor of x1000 for the increase in gun prices over sixty years, which I think is about 12% interest compounded. Not a bad investment, except for the costs of licensing, re-licensing and licensing some more.

Oh, pity the young collector of today, but really, 'the good old days' seem to be roughly equivalent to when the collector in question got started. When is the best time to plant a tree? Answer: twenty years ago. The next best time is NOW. The same seems to be true of gun-collecting, and 'investment value' is a perfectly valid reason to get started right now. Who knows where prices will be in 25 years' time? For some these ARE 'the good old days'. – **Malcolm Cobb** 

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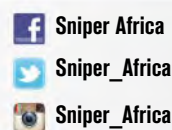


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